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# A GUIDE TO PICTURES

# A GUIDE TO PICTURES

## FOR BEGINNERS AND STUDENTS

BY

CHARLES H. CAFFIN

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"THE APPRECIATION OF THE DRAMA"

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# A GUIDE TO PICTURES

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### CHAPTER I

#### THE FEELING FOR BEAUTY

SOME of you, I expect, collect photographs of pictures in connection with your history studies. These portraits of the principal characters and pictures, illustrating great events, places, costumes, and modes of living of the period, add greatly to the interest of your reading. They bring the past time vividly before your eyes.

But it is not this view of pictures that we are going to talk about in the present book. I shall have very little to say about the subjects of pictures—partly because you can find out for yourselves what subjects interest you; but mostly, because the subject of a picture has so very little to do with its beauty as a work of art. For it is this view of a picture, as being a work of art, that I shall try to keep before you.

I remember seeing the photograph of a picture hanging in a place of honor on the wall of a girl's room; and I asked her why she had chosen this particular one out of many that she had. You see that, in order to help anyone, you have to try to get into

their minds, and find out how their minds are working; and as much of my work is with girls and boys, I try to get from them hints as to the best way of helping them. Well, this girl, let me tell you, bubbled over with life and fun, swam like a fish and climbed trees like a squirrel; but she had her thoughtful moods, when, as often as not, she would lay out her collection of photographs of pictures on the floor, and not only look at them, but think about them. And I have no doubt that she was in one of those moods, when she chose out this particular print and hung it on her wall, in order that she might see it often.

So I asked her why she had chosen it, and she said: "Because I liked it." I asked her why? "Oh, I don't know," she said. Now that is just the sort of girl or boy for whom I am writing this book. Not that I think that girl would have liked her picture any better for knowing why she liked it. Then, "What is the good," you ask, "of writing a book to help her to know?" A very shrewd question and quite to the point. Let me try to answer it.

When the girl said she did not know why she liked the picture, I think she meant that she could not put into words what she felt. It was the feeling with which the picture filled her that made her like it. I could understand what she meant, because I remembered an experience of my own. The first time that I saw Raphael's *Disputá*, which decorates a wall in one of the rooms of the Vatican in Rome, I had set out with my guidebook, intending to study all the

paintings by Raphael that decorate these rooms. I entered the first room and, I suppose, looked round the walls and saw three other paintings; but all I recall during this visit was the *Disputá*. I sat down before it and remained seated! I do not know how long, but the morning slipped away. What I thought about as I looked at the picture I cannot tell you. My impression is that I did not think at all; I only felt. My spirit was lifted up and purified and strengthened with happiness. Returning to my hotel, I read about the picture in the guidebook. It appeared that one of the figures represented Dante. I had not noticed it, and as I read on I found out other things that I had missed; that, indeed, the whole subject, so far as it could be put into words, had escaped me. I had no knowledge of what the painting was about; only I had felt its beauty.

Since then I have studied the picture and discovered some of the means that Raphael employed to arouse this depth of feeling, and the knowledge has helped me to find beauty in other things.

So, to go back to my girl friend, I would not disturb the beauty of her feeling with teachy-teachy talk, any more than I would talk while beautiful music was being played. But, suppose in a simple way I could make her understand that I, too, felt the beauty of the picture; and, as I have learned a little how to express feeling in words, should try to tell her how I felt the beauty. Might it not add to her pleasure, if she discovered that I was putting

into words some of the feeling that she herself had, and perhaps suggesting other beauties that she had not felt?

Well, that is what I hope to do for you in this book, to put some ideas into your head, that will lead you to look for and find more and more beauty in pictures and in nature and in life. Ideas, mark you, not words. We shall have to use words, but words are of no account, unless they make you feel the idea contained in them.

I say feel; and you will notice I have used these words, feel and feeling, several times already. I have done so because I want to impress upon you that the enjoyment of beauty, whether in pictures or any other form, comes to us through feeling. It may lead to thinking, and perhaps should, but it does not begin with thinking or reasoning, as does, for example, algebra or geometry. Nor can we, as we say, "get it down fine," in the way we do with the Latin declensions. When you have learned them thoroughly, you know them once and for all, and you know about them just what every other girl and boy who has learned them knows. With feeling it is otherwise. What *you* feel is different to what *I* feel; we can never feel alike. No two people can. So I am not going to tell you what you ought to feel about pictures; nor am I going to try and persuade you to like one and not like another. Therefore, this book would not be much help to you in passing an examination about pictures, if anything so foolish could be supposed. But I hope it

may start your imagination off in a great many new directions, and help you to discover more and more of beauty not only in pictures, but in life.

For we should study pictures not solely for their own sake, but also as a means of making our lives fuller and better. If you ask me what is the most beautiful thing in the world, I shall not say art, although I am writing about pictures—but life—its fullness of possibility and abundance of opportunity. Especially young life; the lives of you girls and boys, who, as yet, have so few mistakes to regret, so much to look forward to of promise and fulfillment. What you will make of those lives of yours may depend a little upon schools and teachers, parents and friends, money and health, and many other things, but most of all upon your own wills. I wonder if you have read the life of Robert Louis Stevenson?

He had only such education as many other boys of his time had, little or no money, and very poor health. But what a deal he made of his own life and how he helped the lives of others! What a fellow he was for fun, and how he loved wisdom; a great worker and a greatly conscientious one; not satisfied unless his work was the very best that he could make it. And the reason was that he loved beauty as well as wisdom; and in his life and writings, because in his own inward thoughts wisdom and beauty went hand in hand. I know of no better example of the full life; of a life made the most of, in the best and truest sense, with gladness and

strength for itself and for the lives of others. While his body sleeps on an island mountain, overlooking the vast beauty of sky and ocean, his spirit stays with us.

The secret of the fullness of Stevenson's life was that, so far as in him lay, he left no portion of the garden of his life uncultivated. There were no waste places, every part was fruitful. He did the best that he could for his poor, weak body; kept his intellect bright with learning, his fun alert with hope, his friendships warm with sympathy; and kept his life and work sweetened and purified and strengthened by the love of beauty. He was in a high sense in love with life—his own life, the lives of others, and life in art and nature, and the abundant harvest of his garden is the love that countless men and women and children bore him and still maintain.

Such fullness of life is rare. Boys and girls, and for that matter men and women, cultivate some part of themselves, and let the rest go to waste. And the part which is most apt to be overlooked is the sense of beauty. We train our bodies and our minds, but neglect those five senses, which are just as much a part of us. It is true that men train their senses for the practical purposes of business: the watchmaker, for instance, his delicacy of touch; the tea producer, his senses of taste and smell; the mariner, his senses of sight and sound. But business, though necessary, is not everything. We do not confine the exercise of our bodies and minds to work and business, but use them also for enjoyment, and train them

for this purpose. Do we not learn to swim, play ball and tennis, and practice other bodily exercises for the pure enjoyment of them? Or in our leisure moments busy our brains with study of bees, machinery, history, all kinds of difficult subjects not as work, but as a relief from work? We call them our "hobbies," and indulge them for pleasure, and find that the pleasure improves our health and spirits, and in the end even makes us do our necessary work better, and so find more pleasure in that also. For it is in what we know best and can do best that we really take most pleasure. And though life cannot be all pleasure, yet pleasure, rightly understood, should be one of the chief aims of life. And one of the chief sources of pleasure is to be found in the beauty that reaches our minds through the senses, especially through the senses of sight and sound.

Let me illustrate in a simple way how one child will gain pleasure from her senses while another doesn't. Both have their five senses in working order —smell, taste, touch, sight, and sound—and have been in the woods gathering flowers. They reach home. One throws her handful down on a sofa, table, or chair, or the nearest bit of furniture, and goes off to do something, or it may be nothing, leaving the flowers to wither and become an untidiness. What made her gather them? Perhaps, because she is full of health and had to run about and do something; perhaps, because she has not quite gotten over the fondness that most of us had, as babies, for breaking and tearing things. It amused her to break

the big stems and tear off the vines or pull up the little plants. Or possibly she was really attracted by the beauty of the flowers, but soon tired of them, and went off to other things.

Not so, however, with her companion. She spreads a paper on the table, lays out her flowers, brings one or two vases, and settles down to the pleasure of arranging them. She picks up a flower, and while she waits to decide in which vase it shall be put, see how delicately she handles it! You can tell in a moment she has a feeling of love and tenderness toward the flower. She puts it in a vase, and then her eye travels over the other flowers to decide which shall bear it company. What color, what form of flower will match best the first one? And while she is making the choice almost unconsciously she sniffs the fragrance of that spray of honeysuckle. Well, she lingers so long over the pleasure of arranging her flowers that we have not time to stay and watch the whole proceeding; but presently, when we come back, we find the vases filled and set about the room where they will look their best; this one in the dark corner with the wall behind it; another on the window sill, so that the light may shine through the petals of the flowers. And we think to ourselves what taste the girl has! For (have you ever thought of it?) we use the word taste, which originally described only the sense of tasting things with the tongue, in order to sum up a finer use of the senses of sight and sound.

And this finer use of the senses, such as Steven-

son cultivated, so that his life and works are beautiful as well as wise and good, we too may cultivate, and it is the object of this book to help us do it. I call it a guide to pictures, but I want to make it much more than that—a guide for the wonderful organs, your senses, that they may grow more and more to feel the beauty that is all about us in nature and in life, as well as in pictures and other works of art. So beauty is really our subject, beauty in nature and in art. The two are separate, though united as twin sisters.

As I write, many of you are enjoying your summer vacations, face to face with nature. The health of the mountains or the sea is in your blood; your bodies know the joy of active movement; your minds are filled with the interest of new scenes and adventures, of sports and fun with friends. But every once in a while I think it likely that your happiness is increased by something beautiful you have seen in nature. Perhaps even now, as you read these words, there comes to you the memory of some sunset, or moonlight on the water, of early morning mist creeping among the tree tops, or I know not what of nature's beauty, suddenly revealed to you because you were in the mood to receive it.

You were in the company of a friend, and you drew your arm closer through his or hers, and both were the happier for the beauty that was before you and had entered into your hearts. Or perhaps you were alone, and the eagerness came over you to make some record of your joy—in a letter to a friend or

in some poem for no eyes but your own. You felt the need to give utterance to your joy in nature's beauty. You had in you a little of the desire that stirs the artist.

And this brings us to the other kind of beauty, which is not of nature, though it is of nature's prompting—the beauty created by the artist. We are going to study the work of artists who create beauty in pictures. But do not make the mistake some people do, of thinking that it is only painters who are artists. An artist is one who fits some beautiful conception with some beautiful form of expression. His form of expression, or as we say, his art, may be sculpture, painting, or architecture; or some handicraft, as of metal or porcelain or embroidery; or it may be music, the composing of music or the rendering of it by instrument or voice; it may be acting or some forms of dancing; it may be poetry or even prose. The artist, in a word, is one who not only takes beauty into his own soul, but has the gift of art that enables him to communicate the beauty to others by giving it a form or body. If he be a musician, he gives it a form of sound; if a painter, a form visible to the eye. It is his power of creating a form for the beauty which he feels that makes him an artist. And in its various forms—poetry, music, painting, sculpture, architecture, and the rest—art is man's highest expression of his reverence for and joy in beauty.

## CHAPTER II

### ART AND HER TWIN SISTER, NATURE

*A Work of Art is Distinguished by Selection*

IN the previous chapter we talked about beauty, and noted that there were two kinds—beauty in nature and beauty in art. Let us now look a little more closely into this distinction, so that we may grasp the idea of what a work of art is.

Since what the painter puts onto his canvas is visible to the eye, it will generally represent or suggest some form in nature. So the painter is a student of nature. But not in the same way as the botanist who studies the forms of trees and plants which grow above the ground, or the geologist who explores the secrets of the earth below the ground. These we call scientists or scientific students, because the object of their study is exact knowledge of nature. They address themselves directly to our *intellects* and teach us to *know* the *facts* of nature accurately; but the painter appeals first to our *sense of sight* and helps us to *feel* more deeply the *beauty* of the visible world.

Unless we thoroughly grasp this difference we shall never properly understand what painters try to do, nor be able properly to enjoy their pictures.

So here, at the beginning of our talks together, let us look into this difference.

We have said that the painter represents or suggests some form in nature. Sometimes he represents the actual appearance of nature, as when he paints a portrait or a landscape. At other times he suggests the possible appearance of things, which he has never seen but only imagines, as the old Italian painters did when they made pictures of St. George, killing the dragon, or of Christ in the manger, with a choir of angels hovering above. They had never seen a dragon, but from their study of the lizard, which in hot countries like Italy may constantly be seen basking on the hot rocks or darting away at your approach, they imagined a form and painted it so that it suggests an actual creature. So, for their angels, they studied the forms and movement of children, as they ran and played, with hair and skirts streaming in the wind; also the wings and the flight of birds, and the appearance of the sky. Nature was, as it still remains, the artist's teacher. Just in what way he learns of her and uses her lessons, I am going to try and show you. But first let me remind you that nature and art, though so close together that I have called them twin sisters, are quite separate. I do so because many people confuse them together. Frequently you will hear a person say of some view of nature that it is "beautiful as a picture." Well, very likely it is, but as we shall see, not in the same way. Or some one will exclaim, as he stands in front of a picture, "It looks like nature." So it

does; and yet it is not really like nature. Why both these remarks are in a small way true, but in the big sense not true, we shall discover, I hope, presently. Meanwhile, suppose we lay the book aside and look out of the window.

Are you living in the country or city? In either case you are looking out at nature, as the painter understands the word. For, while we who are not painters, when we talk of nature, have in mind the earth and sky and water, and the living things that move therein, as beasts, birds, and fishes, and the forms that live but do not move, trees and flowers and seaweed, for example, and also the chief of living and moving creatures—man; the painter uses the word nature in a wider sense. With him it means everything outside himself, so that it includes things made by man: streets, buildings, chairs, and tables—the thousand and one objects that man's brain and handiwork have fashioned out of the materials of nature.

But you are waiting at the window, looking out, perhaps, upon a street—a row of buildings, many people on the sidewalks, carriages and carts, passing before your eyes; or else into the garden of your country home, with its trees and shrubs and flowers, and possibly a view of fields and hills and woods. In each case the woodwork of the window frames in the view. Move slowly backward and you will notice that the view grows smaller and smaller; advance again and the view spreads out farther and farther; step to the left and some of the view on that side disappears,

but you will see more toward the other side. Imagine for a moment that the woodwork of the window is a picture frame and you are deciding how much of the outside view you will include in the picture. If you own a kodak and are in the habit of taking pictures, you move the camera or your position until the image in the "finder" seems to be about what you wish to photograph. Whether you thus use the "finder" or the window frame, you are selecting a bit of nature for a picture.

This should make clear to you one of the differences between nature and art. Nature extends in every direction all round the artist, an unending panorama from which he *selects* some little portion to form the subject of his work of art. But he carries his selection still farther, for even in the part of nature that he has selected there is so much more than he could ever put into his picture. Take another look out of the window. What a mass of details the whole presents! And, if we fix our eye on any one of its parts, it also is made up of a number of details. It would be impossible for the artist to paint them all. And so, also, if your view from the window is a country scene and you look at one object, that elm, for example. Do you think it would be possible for an artist to paint all the scales of the bark, all the spreading limbs, much less all the little branches and twigs and the countless leaves?

As the artist cannot possibly paint everything, he must choose or select what he will leave out and what he will put in. Once more, the characteristic of art

is *selection*, while that of nature is abundance. We talk of nature's prodigality; we say that she is prodigal of her resources, flinging them around as a prodigal or wasteful man flings around his money. You know, for example, how the dandelion scatters its seeds broadcast over the lawn; how the daisies spread over the fields until the farmer calls them the "white weed"; how the woods become choked with undergrowth and the trees overhead crowd one another with their tangle of branches. The lawns and fields must be continually weeded; the woods cleared and thinned. Man, in fact, when he brings nature under the work of his hand, is continually selecting what he shall weed out and what he shall let remain. And so the artist with the work of *his* hand—his work of art.

Suppose we make believe that we are watching an artist as he begins his work of selection. The one over there, sitting under a big, white umbrella with his easel in front of him, will serve our turn. If he will let us look over his shoulder, we shall see that with a few strokes of charcoal upon his canvas he has already selected how much of the wide view in front of him he will include in his picture. It finishes, you see, on the right with a bit of that row of trees that stand against the sky, and on the left with that small bush, so that in between is a little bit of the winding road, with a meadow beyond dotted with cows. He has squeezed some of the paint from the tubes on to his palette, and takes up his brushes. Now watch him "lay in," as he would

say, "the local colors"; that is to say, the general color of each locality or part of the scene.

The general color of the sky is a faint blue; of the trees on the right, a grayish green; of the bush on the left, a deeper green; of the meadow, a yellowish green, while that of the road is a pinkish brown, for the soil of this part of the country, we will suppose, is red clay. All these local colors he lays in, covering each part with a flat layer of paint so that his canvas now presents a pattern of colored spaces. Yet already it begins to "look like something." We can see, as it were, the ground plan, on which the artist is going to build up his picture. But now he must stop, for his paints are mixed with oils and take some time to dry, and he cannot work over the paint while it is sticky.

A few days later we pay him another visit. He has been busy in our absence; the picture looks to us to be finished, and we begin to compare it with the natural scene in front of us. In nature those trees on the right stand so sharply against the sky that we can count their branches. Evidently the artist hasn't, for in his picture he has left out a great many of them; indeed, he has put in only a few of the more prominent ones. See, too, how he has painted the trees; he hasn't put in a single leaf. Instead he has represented the foliage in masses, lighter in some parts where the sun strikes, darker in the shadows. When we compare his trees with the real ones, they are not a bit the same, and yet the painted ones look all right; we can see at once that they

are maples and in a general way very like the real ones.

The artist hears us talking, and he says: "My business, you see, is not to make real trees; that's nature's business; I'm a maker of pictures, and in them I only *suggest* that the trees are real. I try to make you feel that these are maple trees"—and he points to that part of the picture with his brush—"and I hope also to make you feel their beauty. I don't give you an imitation of nature, but a suggestion of nature's truth.

"Now see," he says, "how I have painted those cows: just a few dabs of brownish red and black and white, showing against the green of the grass. Do they suggest cows to you?" "Yes," we say in chorus.

"Well, I hope they do," he replies, "and that you don't say 'yes' merely to please me. But if you had never seen a cow would you know from these dabs what a cow is really like?

"I am sure you wouldn't," he goes on without waiting for an answer; "and if the farmer gave me a commission to paint his favorite prize cow, I am sure he wouldn't be satisfied with these dabs. And I should not blame him. No, in that case I should place the cow where I could study it closely: the long, straight line of the back, the big angle of the hips, the strong-ribbed carcass, and its covering of glossy hair, the mild liquid eyes, and damp nose. These and a great deal more I should paint, if I were near the cow. But look at those cows over yonder.

They are a long way off, and consequently look very small. I can't see in them the different points that I know a cow has; to my eyes from where I sit they look as I have painted them. For an artist does not paint what he *knows* to be *there*, but what he can *see* from *here*.

"Look," he continues, picking up a tiny pointed brush. "See what happens, when I paint what I know to be there!" And with quick, deft strokes he proceeds to sharpen the lines of the back of one of his cows in the picture, and give her four very decided legs; to hang a tail; and give her horns; and titivate the head, put in an eye and make the tongue curl round the muzzle.

"Why, it looks like a toy cow!" we exclaim. And so it does.

And now, instead of intruding any longer on our artist friend's time, let us see where our visit to him has brought us.

We have noted that one difference between nature and art is, that nature is inexhaustible in her effects, and that an artist selects from her only some little part to make his work of art. Secondly, that he does not paint the whole of what he has selected, but out of it again selects certain parts; sufficient not to imitate the original, but to suggest its appearance. Thirdly, that natural truth is not the same as artistic truth; that while the scientific man studies one thing at a time so that he may know what is there, the artist tries to obtain an impression of the whole scene, and paints each part of it, not as he knows

it to be, but as he can see it from his fixed position.

By this time you can better understand that to say of nature "It is as beautiful as a picture," is a loose way of talking. Nature is beautiful in the endless variety of its effects; a picture, for the one or two effects, choicely selected by the artist. And to say of a picture that it looks like nature is equally inaccurate, for the artist does not imitate nature but suggests it, which, as we have seen, is a very different thing.

However, I should tell you, that some painters do imitate nature. I have seen a picture in which the painter had represented a five-dollar bill, pinned on a board, and so accurately had he imitated the bill and the board that, until you were close to them and passed your hand over the flat canvas, you would not know it was a picture. And there is a story told of a Greek painter, Zeuxis, that he once imitated a bunch of grapes so exactly, that the birds flew down and pecked at it.

But, although it is a fact that a great many people think this exact imitation of nature a very fine thing, they do so because they have not seen many pictures or found out what a work of art really is. I am inclined to think that, by the time you have finished this book, if not sooner, you will look upon such examples of skill and patience as labor in vain, so far as art is concerned.

It is all very well for the *conjurer* to boast that the quickness of his hand deceives your eye. But the aim of the artist is not deception.

## CHAPTER III

### NATURE IS HAPHAZARD: ART IS ARRANGEMENT

WE have seen that the characteristic of nature is abundance, while that of art is selection. Now let us note another difference between the two —nature is haphazard, art is arrangement.

I do not forget that nature works by laws; that the workings of nature are not accidental, but the result of certain causes which produce certain effects; so that the operations of nature produce an endless chain of cause and effect. Thus in the fall, because the sap flows downward in the tree, the fiber of the leaf's stalk is gradually weakened, until the leaf by degrees loses its hold on the branch, and, because everything obeys the law of gravitation, falls to the ground. But where will it fall? That may depend upon the force and direction of the wind. It may happen that the wind is from the north or from the west; that its breath is soft, or that it blows a gale. I say it "may happen" so or so; for this is our habit of speech. When we don't understand the cause from which an effect springs, we use the word "happen," as if the affair were an accident or chance.

But a scientific man would say that such words

as "accident" and "chance" are inaccurate, and would tell us why the wind was blowing from a certain direction at a certain moment, and tell us why it was soft or fierce. And yet, why should the tiny leaf have been ready to let go just at the moment when the breeze came? Upon what particular spot will the dandelion seed, after floating far in the air, alight? We may believe that the moment and the place are controlled by one Great Mind to whom everything is plain. But to our finite minds, whose capacity to understand is limited, such things are not plain. They seem to us like chance, and their results appear to our eyes haphazard.

Compare, for example, the appearance of nature with that of a well-kept garden. The latter has straight paths, intersecting one another; trim borders with rows of lettuces and radishes; separate plots, reserved for peas, corn, spinach, potatoes, and other crops. Even the straggling vines of the cucumbers are kept within certain bounds. Everywhere is an appearance of order and arrangement, beside which the tangle of growth in the woods, or even the dotting of trees on the hillside, seems haphazard. Or look out into the street, which, as you remember, in the painter's sense of the word is a part of nature. The city authorities have laid out the lines of the street, but the buildings vary in size and style; each one according to what happened to be the need and the taste of the man who built it. And the appearance of the sidewalk and roadway will vary from day to day and hour to hour, according to what may be

the number and the character of the people and of the vehicles, as they happen to move or stand still. Compared with that garden, the appearance of the street is haphazard.

Compare two parlors. One is a medley of furniture and bric-a-brac, of all sorts of sizes and shapes and colors, picked up at auction sales, or in the shops, each because it happened to be a bargain or to strike a moment's whim, and then set in the parlor where there happened to be room for it. The other parlor, on the contrary, shows signs of order and arrangement. There are fewer objects in it, and they have been carefully chosen and arranged for the double purpose of making the room comfortable and agreeable to the eye. It is an illustration of good taste in *selection* and *arrangement.*

The haphazard of nature we enjoy. But the confusion of the parlor distresses us, if we have any sense of selection and arrangement. This sense the artist possesses in a marked degree, and on it he bases the making of his picture.

We have already noticed how he selects, but may have to mention it again in describing how he arranges, since the two acts are mixed up together, as when you select some flowers and then arrange them in a vase.

When we first made the acquaintance of the artist in the previous chapter, he had already, you will remember, " roughed in " with his charcoal the objects he was going to paint. We were so interested in what he had selected, that we paid little attention to

the arrangement of the objects. It is this that we are now going to study.

His canvas is on the easel, its bare white surface inclosed within the four sides. He is going to fill this space, not only for the purpose of suggesting to us the appearance of the scene he has selected, but in such a way that the actual arrangement of the objects—the pattern which they make upon the canvas—shall give us pleasure. This he calls his composition. The word, as you know, if you have studied Latin, means simply "putting" or "placing together." But, as the artist uses it, it always means that the placing together shall produce an effect that is *pleasing to the eye.* It is only when it does, that the result can properly be called a work of art. For you will recall what we said in the first chapter, that the artist is one who fits his conception with a beautiful form. And this form is his composition.

Now, before we go any farther with the artist's method of composition, let me invite you to do a little composing on your own account. That wall in your special room or den where you hang your favorite photographs—how is it arranged? Are the photographs pinned up higgledy-piggledy, so as to crowd as many as possible on the wall? Is your only idea just to hang them up where you can see them? Or have you placed them together in such a way that their actual arrangement, as they spot the open space of your wall, is agreeable to your eye? For, in a way, your wall, before you hung the photographs, was like the bare canvas of the artist. The four

edges inclosed it; the space is yours to do with it what you wish.

Suppose, now, that you are starting with the wall bare. Your family has moved into a new house, or the old one is being repaired. There is your plaster wall, as white as the artist's canvas. You are allowed to decide what shall be done with it. What will *you* do with it?

Oh! you are going to choose a paper. Well, what shall it be? Yes, pretty, of course. But pretty by itself, or when your pictures are hung? For, if you choose a paper with a large pattern of many bright colors, it may interfere with the effect of the pictures. You don't wish to do this? Then it will be well to choose a paper that is not too prominent; one that has a small pattern, or none at all, only a single tint. Some people prefer a neutral tint; one, that is to say, which is neither one thing nor the other; not very green, or blue, or red, or yellow, but rather so; some color that is difficult to define. For, because this paper does not attract particular attention, it allows the photographs, hung upon it, to show up more prominently.

However, the papering is your affair, and you have made your selection. At last the workmen, their ladders, their paste pots, and shavings are cleared out of the room and you can begin to arrange it. You have placed the furniture where it best fits in, looks best, and seems most comfortable, and now you turn your attention to each of the four walls. Once more, is the placing of the photographs to be

higgledy-piggledy, "any-old-how," just to show them, or are you going to arrange them carefully, so as to make each wall a pleasing composition?

We will suppose you decide upon the latter plan. How will you proceed? I can imagine you choosing one of two ways.

Either you will select your biggest picture, or the one you prize most, and place it in the middle of the wall, and then place the others on each side of it, so as to balance one another. Or, you will feel that such an arrangement would be too stiff and formal, too obviously balanced, and will sprinkle the pictures over the wall space, so that their arrangement is irregular and looks as if it were accidental, and yet seems balanced. For, if you are trying to arrange your pictures in the way in which they seem to you to look best, consciously or unconsciously you are working to secure a balance.

Yes, one of the principles of artistic composition is balance. Like all the principles, adapted by artists, it is founded on an instinct of human nature. Have you ever noticed that when a man carries a bucket of water, he holds the free arm away from his body? He does it by instinct, to offset the drag of the bucket on his other arm and to balance his body. Have you ever walked upon the steel rail of a railroad track? Most of us have, I imagine. We tread pretty firmly for a little while, and then we totter. Out go our arms immediately to restore our balance. We walk up and down the deck of an ocean liner, when the sea is rough, and slope our bodies to the

movement of the vessel. Why? To keep our balance. If we lose it we are hurled across the deck in a very undignified fashion. On the contrary, what a beautiful spectacle is presented when a good skater balances backward and forward; perhaps an even more beautiful one, when a good dancer who feels the joy of movement sways to the rhythm of the music.

So, to maintain a balance is an instinct of human nature; to lose it produces ugly results; while beautiful ones may be secured from it, especially if the balance is rhythmic.

Another principle, then, of artistic composition is rhythm, and this, too, is founded on an instinct of human nature. Let us see what rhythm is. A small boy has found an old pot, catches up a stick, and begins to belabor the pot and make himself a nuisance. By and by he gets tired of his own noise, imagines his pot a drum, and hits it with rhythmic strokes, one following the other in measured beats. Watch how his legs begin to move to the time of the strokes, and how the other youngsters fall in behind him. Left, right, left, right, on they march; their legs and shoulders swinging to the rhythmic beat. I wonder if they know they are following an instinct, pretty nearly as old as humanity. Probably they don't, and wouldn't care if they did. All they know is that they are having a good time. That's just it! And they are having the same sort of good time that the primitive man gave his friends, when he first hit on the idea of clapping his hands together in rhythm.

Later on he found he could get more stirring effects and save his hands by rhythmic hammering of one piece of wood upon another. Then came along a primitive Edison who perfected the principle and put tom-toms on the market. And so, in time, music came to be invented. For the basis of music and of the pleasure that is received from it is its measured beat or rhythm.

It is, however, not only from the actual measured beat, appealing to our ear, that we gain pleasure, but also from the suggestion of rhythm to our sense of sight.

A man stone deaf can enjoy watching a dance. He has never heard a sound in his life, but his sense of sight is stirred to pleasure by the spectacle of measured repetition of the movements. Similarly, the measured repetitions of stationary objects gives us pleasure,—the measured repetition, for example, presented by the West Point cadets, as they suddenly halt, either in close formation or in open ranks. "How beautiful!" we exclaim. And it is because the Athenians realized the beauty of measured repetition and the pleasure that it gives to the sense of sight, that they surrounded their great temple, the *Parthenon*, with ranks of columns, arranged at equal distance from one another. For, though they may have learned the beauty of repetition from studying the tree stems in the woods, yet, when they built their work of art, they avoided the haphazard of nature, and introduced order and arrangement by making the repetitions measured.

Behind the columns, however, high up on the outside of the temple wall they set a frieze or band of figures. It extended clear around the temple, representing a procession of people on their way to the great festival of the goddess Athene. The remains are now in the British Museum; but, doubtless, you have seen casts of portions of it, and will recall some in which young men are riding, the head of each horse overlapping the body of the one in front of it. There is here no longer an actual measured repetition, as in the case of the columns. The bodies are not separated by exact intervals, nor do they repeat the same forms. The youths differ, so do the horses, and the actions of the forms are dissimilar. And yet the arching of the horses' necks, the prancing of the forelegs, and the bodies of the youths swaying to the movement of the horses are so arranged, that there is no break or interruption or confusion, but the whole *seems* to flow up and down regularly. There are no actual, measured intervals or actual repetitions, yet the feeling of both is suggested. The arrangement of the forms is rhythmic, in that it *suggests* rhythm. And the principle of this also the Greeks found in nature, as you may, if you watch the waves rolling shoreward.

But all this while the artist's canvas is standing white and bare upon the easel, and must continue to stand. For, when he gets to work, I want you, not only to see what he does, but feel the meaning of his intention. And we can best enter into another person's feeling, if we have experienced something of his

feeling in ourselves. So, I have rummaged among our own experiences, in order to make you feel how much we have in common with the artist. He and ourselves are creatures of like nature, with similar senses, similar sources of pleasure and pain, and similar instincts leading us to do and to like similar things. Only the artist has keener senses, and has cultivated his instincts and study of nature, and has drawn from them certain practical hints to help him create his work of art.

Among the instincts that we share with him are, as I have tried to show—first, an instinctive preference for order and arrangement; secondly, the need of balance and the pleasure we receive from it; thirdly, the increased pleasure we derive from balance, when it is accompanied with rhythmic repetitions. These are the principles on which he relies when he makes his composition. For let me repeat, and not for the last time, that the purpose of his composition is not only to suggest some scene of nature, but to make the composition itself a source of pleasure to our sense of sight.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONTRAST

IN the previous chapter we discussed balance and repetition as elements of composition. We have now to study another element—that of contrast. This also results from a natural love of change and variety. How sick we should get of candy, if we had nothing else to eat! how tired of sunshine, if there were never a cold or wet day to make the sun seem extra beautiful by contrast! "Jack," as we know, "will become a dull boy," if his studies are not enlivened by play; but how worse than dull—stupid and ill-tempered—if his play were not relieved by something serious. Yes, contrast is the salt of life, without which living would be tasteless and insipid. More than this, I can hardly believe that a boy or girl can grow up to be brave and true, a really fine specimen of manhood or womanhood, unless some shadow of hardship and pain has passed over the sunny period of youth. We have to learn to take the bitter with the sweet, and it is through meeting each, as it comes along, as a part of the day's work, that we gradually build up character.

So contrast, it seems, serves two purposes in life —it adds to the pleasure of life, and it gives force

and worth to character. Its effects in art are very similar. The artist employs it to give variety and at the same time character and distinction to the pattern of his compositions.

You can find out for yourselves how he does this, if you take a piece of paper, a pencil, a pair of compasses, and a straight-edge. First draw a rectangle. This is the space to be filled or developed into a composition. Now draw a vertical line up the center of it. You will admit that this is not interesting by itself; but cut it at right angles with a horizontal line, and immediately the figure begins to have some character. Immediately, also, if you have any eye for balance—and almost everybody has—you will begin to notice that it makes a great difference at just what point the horizontal line cuts the vertical. In the first place, whether the arms of the horizontal are or are not the same length—then, at how high or how low a point on the vertical line they branch out. You can experiment with these two lines until the cross seems to you to look its best.

You could not draw anything much simpler than this figure; and yet it is sufficient to illustrate two principles of contrast in composition—first, that the contrast is interesting, and second, that it is made more interesting, when the contrasted parts are carefully balanced. Now take the compasses and, centering on the point of intersection of the two lines, describe a circle. The latter will introduce into the figure a still further contrast between curved and straight lines. And again your sense of balance will

be brought into play. How far will you make your circle extend? It is for you to say, because you are trying to satisfy your own feeling for what will look best. Now, as a contrast to this circle, add four smaller ones at the extremities of the cross. Next, from the center of the big circle draw radiating lines. As a last touch of contrast, suppose you draw a segment of a circle in each of the four corners of the rectangle.

By this time we have built up a composition, the pattern of which consists of contrasts. But, as I dare say you have noticed, it also consists of repetitions. And once more I will remind you that both the repetitions and the contrasts are balanced. Contrast, repetition, and balance—these are the simple elements of composition.

Our pattern or composition is a very simple form of geometric figure. If you feel disposed, you can amuse yourself by devising other kinds of simple patterns; starting, for example, with a circle inside your rectangular space; or, selecting, to begin with, a circular frame and starting with a triangle or square inside of it, and in either case continuing to build up or embroider your design with additional features. In this way by varying the shape of your original frame and the character of the pattern that you put in it, you can go on indefinitely inventing designs. All these, I want you to observe, are geometric in character. They are based upon the figures which you find in geometry—the square, rectangle, triangle, and circle.

Now just as the acorn may in time become the great oak tree, so this simple basis of geometric design is at the root of the compositions of the great Italian pictures and of thousands of other pictures, even to our own day. Their compositions are based upon a geometric plan. The only difference is that your plan is clearly visible, while theirs is more or less disguised. The reason is that they do not fill their spaces, as you did, with simple lines, but with forms—figures, columns, buildings, draperies, trees, hills, and so on. Consequently, when we speak of the "lines" of their compositions, we often mean rather the direction which the figure, or the object whatever it may be, takes. Thus, a standing figure may take the place of your vertical line; the slightly undulating top of the hills behind it may correspond to your horizontal line; a curving group of angels, floating in the air, may suggest your circle; while your diagonal line may be replaced in the picture by the branches of a tree that spread in a diagonal direction. In other words, what you have done (shall I say?) stiffly with compasses and straight-edge, the artists do freely and loosely. Yet, I repeat it, underneath this seeming freedom, if you search for it, you will find the basis of a geometric design. This I hope to show you in the following chapter. Meanwhile, there is another use for contrast that you should know.

It is the contrast between the light and the dark parts of a picture. It is employed, in the first place, to make the objects in the picture look more real. If

you fix your eyes on any object in the room or out of doors, you will observe that some parts of it are light and some dark, and that there are various degrees of lightness and darkness. It is the light on an object that enables us to see it. If there were no light on it—if it were in complete darkness, that is to say—nothing would be visible. And, while it is the light that enables us to see the object, it is the degree of light on some parts of it and the various degrees of darkness on others that enable us to realize the shape of it. In other words, the contrast of light and dark, received by the eyes, communicates to our brain the sense of form and bulk.

That it should do so seems to be the gradual result of a habit, unconsciously acquired. Those who study such things tell us that we began to perceive things, not through the sense of sight, but by the sense of touch. The baby reaches out its little hand to feel for the mother's breast; it burrows its way to her warm body; is comforted by the feel of her arms around it. When the child is older and you present her with a doll, you may be disappointed that she does not at once show pleasure. Instead of her face lighting up with joy, as you hoped it would, she stares at the doll in rather a dull way. But presently she stretches out her hands, and takes the doll into them and begins to feel it all over, and at length clasps it in her arms against her body. It is by the sense of touch that she seems to have assured herself that the doll is "real." When she is older, however, if you offer her a new doll, immediately her face

lightens with gladness of welcome. For, in the meantime she has learned to know a doll by sight, and now when she gets it into her hands she turns it round and round that she may look at it, patting the face, however, and the dress, and lifting up the lace of the petticoats and handling the sash, because, although she has grown to recognize things by her sense of sight, she has not lost her delight in the sense of touch. Nor will she, I hope, as she grows older. Indeed, artists, knowing how much pleasure people derive from the feel of things, take great pains, as we shall see in another chapter, to paint the surfaces, or, as they suggest it, the *texture* of objects, in such a way as to make us feel how pleasant it would be to touch them. Besides, it makes the figure seem so much more real, if they suggest to us that, if we touched the face, it would feel like flesh; or, if we could pass our hand over the dress, it would seem soft and mossy like velvet, or smooth and polished like satin.

But, to return to the contrast of light and dark. Although it is by this contrast that we get an impression of the form or bulk of an object, most people are not aware of the fact. They have grown up in the habit of recognizing things by sight, without being conscious of how they do so. They just see things. Artists, however, have had to learn the reason and how to apply it to painting.

. . . . . .

The history of modern painting extends back about six hundred years. In the thirteenth century,

the paintings which decorated some of the churches in Italy were painted in what is called a conventional way. That is to say, a certain custom was followed by all the painters. They represented the heads and hands of their figures, but the bodies were covered with draperies, under which there was little or no suggestion of any form or bulk. For the whole figure appeared flat. It was as if you should make a little figure of clay or paste, and then pass a roller over it, until its thickness is flattened down into nothing but length and breadth. The figures, in fact, gave no appearance of being real and lifelike because, as artists would say, there was no drawing in them. There was nothing to suggest that the figures had real bodies.

By degrees, however, people grew tired of these unlifelike figures, and a painter named Giotto (1266?–1337) became the leader of a new motive in painting. It was simply to try and make the figures look real and the scenes in which they appeared seem natural. Instead of following a convention, he used his eyes and studied nature. He was no longer satisfied to fill in the background of his picture with a flat gold tint as the conventional painters had done. He wished to increase the reality of his figures by representing them in real surroundings, sometimes in a room, sometimes out of doors. Instead of being content to make his pictures flat, representing only length and breadth, he set to work to create the suggestion of the third dimension—depth. He would try and make you feel that you

could walk from the foreground of his picture, step by step, through to the background; and that, as you reached each figure or object in the scene, you could pass your hand round it and feel that it had real bulk. I said "step by step" and I lay stress on it. For what Giotto tried to represent was not merely some figures in front and then a big gap that you had to jump over before you reached the background, but what the artists call the "successive planes" of the scene—the step-by-step appearance of the scene.

Perhaps you will grasp better what this means if, when you next go to the theater, you carefully observe the scenery, representing some outdoor effect. On each side of the stage, very likely representing tree trunks, there is a series of "wings," one behind another at a distance of say five feet, while across the stage, hanging down from the "flies," is a series of cut cloths, representing foliage, that correspond with the wings and seem to be branches of the tree trunks. Well, these cloths and their wings correspond to the "successive planes" of a picture. They lead gradually back and you can actually walk in and out of them. But, when you reach the back cloth, you are stopped, so far as your legs are concerned. If you are sitting in the auditorium, however, your eye goes traveling on and on a long distance, for the back cloth is itself a picture, in which there is an *illusion* of successive planes.

The artist's word for representing the successive planes is perspective. If you stand between the rails of a trolley line or railroad and look along it, the

lines seem to draw together or converge. Yet in reality you know that they are equidistant from each other all the way along. But, since our power of seeing becomes less and less as objects are farther removed from us, so to our diminishing sight the size and distinctness of the space between the rails appears also to diminish. In the same way you will observe that the width of the street seems to diminish, and the people and wagons appear smaller and smaller, according as they are seen farther and farther back in the successive planes. The houses, too —you know that if you stood in front of any of the houses, exactly facing it, the upright sides would appear to be, as they are, of equal height, and that the windows and cornice would appear in parallel horizontal lines. Yet, as you stand in the street and look along the houses on either side, they present a different apppearance. In the case of each house the upright side, nearer to you, seems higher than the one farther off, and the rows of windows and the line of the cornice appear to slope downward. For the houses as they take their places in the receding or successive planes seem to diminish in size.

This, you see, is another example of what we have already said, that the artist does not paint what he knows to be facts, but the appearances, as he sees them from the point where his eyes are—his "point of sight." You remember how in an earlier chapter that artist represented, or rather suggested the cows in the distance by a few dabs. That was how he saw them from his point of sight. I could not tell you

then, but you will understand now, that he was obeying the law of perspective, and was representing the cows as they appeared in their own proper plane of the scene. Do you remember that when he drew in their horns and tails and other details, they looked like toy cows? We can now see why. They contradicted their surroundings; they no longer were at home in their own plane; their plane was a good way off, but they were represented as if close to our eyes; and, as we saw how small they were, they seemed to us like toy cows.

You see, it is entirely a matter of how things look to the eyes. The painter, as I have said, does not represent the facts as he knows them to be, but the impressions which the facts make upon his eyesight; and these impressions, by the way in which he renders them, he hands on to us. His picture is not nature, but a suggestion or illusion of nature.

Now, although Giotto had dicovered that, to make you feel that you could walk back through his pictures, he must represent the successive planes, he only partly found out how to do it. It was not until nearly a hundred years later that a painter named Masaccio learned how to fill the whole of his picture with a suggestion of atmosphere, so that the objects took their places properly in their proper planes, and it was still later before artists thoroughly worked out the methods of perspective.

The greatest difficulty that they had to surmount was how to "foreshorten" their figures, or represent them in "foreshortening." A simple way of under-

standing what this means is to stand in front of a mirror and stretch out your arms to left and right, like the arms of a cross. Each extends a long way. But now bring them in front of you and stretch them toward the mirror. At once they look shorter, or at any rate you cannot see their length. They appear foreshortened. Or you may practice a still more "violent" example of foreshortening, if you are able to place the mirror where you can see your body, when lying down with the feet toward it, for now the whole length of the body appears foreshortened in the mirror. The surface of the latter, you observe, corresponds exactly with the surface of a picture. It is a flat plane upon which is produced the appearance of successive or receding planes, and though you cannot see the length of your body because it is foreshortened, you are made to feel its length.

It was a long time before artists overcame the difficulty of representing this effect; and the first pictures in which it was accomplished were naturally regarded as wonders. Since it is not the purpose of this book to teach you to draw I will mention only one of the principles involved. It is the one we have already been discussing—the contrast of light and dark, or, as it is called, "chiaroscuro." Artists soon discovered that, if an object has bulk, that part of it which is nearest to the light will reflect most light; the parts less near, less light; while the parts that are exposed to no light will appear dark. As this was how the artists saw the objects, it was so they tried

to represent them. They learned to "model" the object, that is to say, to represent it as having bulk, by reproducing in their pictures the contrasts of light and dark. At first the contrasts were crude, chiefly of the very light and very dark, but by degrees the artists became more skillful and learned to represent also all the varying gradations of less light and less dark. By this time they were better able to surmount the difficulty of foreshortening.

You will see how, if you will again stand in front of the mirror and stretch out one arm toward it. The simplest test is made, if you can arrange that the light shall be directly at your back, for then it is reflected by the mirror on to the front of you. In this case you will notice that your outstretched hand receives the most light, because it is nearest to the light. If it were represented in this way in a picture, our habit of seeing the highest or brightest light on the highest or most directly exposed surface of an object would make us feel that the hand projected in front of the body.

If, however, you stand before the mirror with light falling upon you from one side, the picture in the mirror will be quite different in appearance. The light and shadow will be more broken up and diversified. Some part of your hand, it may be simply the edges of the fingers, will catch a high light, even if it is not the highest; and light probably will fall on your forearm, between the wrist and elbow, and again upon the upper part of the arm. Broadly speaking, your arm presents three planes of form—

the hand, the forearm, and the upper arm. And, though to your untrained eye the light on all of these planes may seem the same, to an artist's eye it would vary according to the angle at which the light hits the plane, or, as the artist himself would say, according to the angle of the plane. These angles vary all over the figure, as you may be able to see if you examine your picture in the mirror. To mention a few, in a general way, there are several angles around each of the shoulders, about the breast, round the neck, while the face, with its projecting nose, its receding eye sockets, its rounded cheeks and so on, presents a regular patchwork of angles of plane. Or shall I say, the whole figure presents a whole multitude of facets like a cut diamond? Only, unlike the diamond, its facets are uneven in size and irregular in shape. And just as the light on the facets, here very light and elsewhere not so light, informs us of the shape of the diamond, so do these differently lighted angles of plane, when presented in a picture, give us the suggestion of the figure's shape.

And now study the shadows in your mirror picture. They result from the opposite of what we have been talking about. In their case the angles of plane are turned away from instead of toward the light, and some parts, such as the hollows of the folds of your dress or coat, seem to catch no light at all and to be quite dark. I expect you find it much easier to detect the various gradations of dark or shadows than those of the light. And a great many artists, especially in olden times, seem to have seen the shadows

more than the lights—for they represent the former with more subtlety, that is to say, with a keener eye for variations, than they do the latter. Indeed, the subtle rendering of light is particularly an accomplishment of modern artists.

Well, if you have carefully studied your portrait in the mirror, I think you must have discovered how large a part the contrast of light and shadow plays in the appearance of the figure, and therefore, what an equally important part it plays in producing an illusion of reality in the picture. I do not forget that an artist by simply drawing an outline with a pen or pencil can also suggest to us the appearance of an object. But, if he does so, it is by the help of ourselves, for he relies on our imagination to supply what he has omitted.

Finally, before we leave the mirror portrait, I should like to ask you in which of the following ways you see it: Do you see it as a bold, simple composition of light and dark? Or are you conscious of a hundred and one little details about the clothes and face and hair and so on? The former is what artists call the "broad" way of seeing nature. Many artists see nature in this way and represent in a bold, free, broad manner simply the big general facts. Others, on the other hand, as you may be, are conscious at once of the great variety of details of which the whole is composed, and represent the subject in a highly detailed manner. Neither is *the* right nor *the* wrong way. Thousands of fine pictures have been painted in both ways. On the other hand, if

you find you grow to like one way more than another, it will be because you yourself, as well as the artist, have the habit of receiving impressions in that way. Do not on that account think other people wrong for receiving impressions differently and therefore preferring the other sort of picture. We cannot help having preferences, but they shouldn't prejudice us against the preferences of others.

## CHAPTER V

### GEOMETRIC COMPOSITION

IN the previous chapters we talked about the elements of composition. We found that the composition or arrangement of figures and objects in the picture is designed by artists for two purposes: Firstly, to represent some subject; and, secondly, to represent it in such a way that the arrangement itself will be a source of pleasure. This second purpose is what makes the picture a work of art. And we found that the artist, in order to make his composition give pleasure to our sense of sight, relies upon the pleasure that we derive from repetition and contrast, and upon the instinct that we all have for keeping our balance. The elements of composition, in fact, are repetition and contrast in a state of balance, sometimes with the added charm of rhythm. We also found that one way in which artists contrive to make this balance of repetition and contrast is by playing, as we may say, upon the simple geometrical patterns of the rectangle, triangle, and circle.

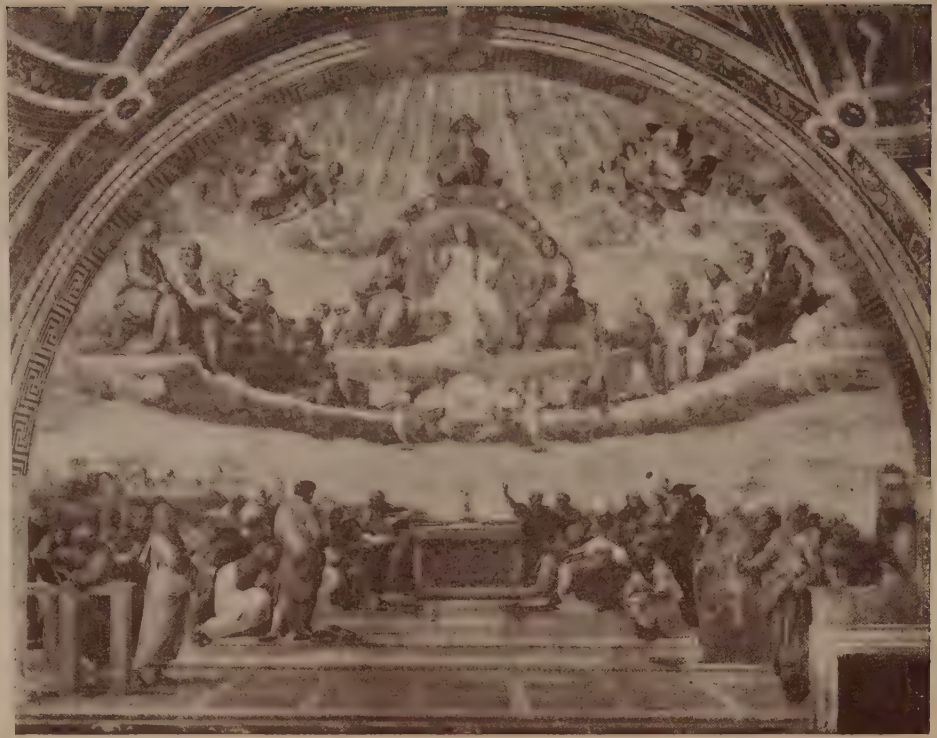
Now let us study an actual example, and for the purpose I have chosen Raphael's *Disputá*.[1] It is

[1] Pronounced dees-poo-táh, with the accent on the last syllable. See page 13.

painted on a wall of one of the "Stanze" or suite of rooms in the Vatican, the home of the Pope, in Rome. Raphael painted many other decorations in these rooms, but this was his first one, executed when as a young man of twenty-five he had been summoned from Florence to work for the powerful pope, Julian II. Raphael had been a pupil of Perugino, and he took one of the geometrical designs that his master had already used. The pupil, however, improved upon it.

Observe, first, the shape of the space that Raphael was called upon to decorate. It is known as a lunette or moon-shape. Now it was this space and no other, that for the time being, he had to decorate. What he put into it, must be suggested by, one may almost say, must grow out of, the particular shape of this space. In fact, the outside lines of the lunette, and the lines inside, must *together* form the pattern of the composition. Now observe how he did it. Briefly, he put into it a number of curved lines, that would repeat the curve of the outside, and sometimes also be in contrast to it. Likewise he introduced horizontal lines, to repeat the bottom edge, and vertical ones in contrast. Let us examine it more closely.

Not quite in the center but nearly so, is a small circle, on which appears a dove. This circle arrests our eye, and its effect is to make us feel very certainly that part of the composition is above it and part below. It is repeated above by a much larger circle. This is not completed; for its regularity of



La Disputá del Sacramento. *Raphael.*

shape is interrupted by the two figures, seated one on each side. The circle seems to pass behind these till it merges with the clouds below. Both the small and the large circles repeat the outside curves of the lunette. On the other hand the curve of the clouds, and the figures seated upon them form a contrasting curve, and there is another one higher up, formed by the two groups of floating angels. In the center, above the larger circle, is a figure with a nimbus that points up, carrying our eye toward an imaginary center, somewhere outside the picture, from which start the radiating lines. So the impression of that part of the picture that we have been examining is of uplift. By successive steps the eye and, through it, the imagination, are invited to mount up.

And now for the part below the small circle, separated from what is above by an open space of clear blue sky. Do you notice that the band of figures stretching across this part takes the form of a curve, repeating the curves of the circles but contrasted with the two important curves of cloud? Its effect is to prevent one's gaze from soaring altogether upward. This downward curve, as it were, tethers the composition to the ground firmly in the two corners. And now note that the central feature of this lower part is the altar, an equilateral, in strongest possible contrast to the curves and circles above it. That it may have still stronger emphasis, observe how its horizontal lines are repeated down to the bottom of the picture by the steps, so that the eye, as it were, mounts the steps to this central feature.

Further the equilateral is again enforced and also balanced by the vertical and horizontal lines, forming a suggestion of equilateral figures in the corners. The one on the right is actually a doorway; the black part is the door. Some artists might have felt it was a drawback to have a bit thus cut out of the picture. Not so Raphael. There, as elsewhere in these rooms, he takes the doorway into his composition and makes it serve a very useful purpose of emphasising the corner, and then invents another structure to strengthen equally the corner opposite.

Now note the radiating lines of the pavement. In a general way they repeat the radiation of the lines at the top of the picture; but they are farther apart and bolder, as befits the bolder character of the lower part. Have you discovered the point from which these lines of the pavement radiate? By using a straight edge to each in turn, you will find that all the lines, if continued would meet within the little circle of ornament that stands upon the altar. To this point also the gaze of many of the figures is directed.

Some of the figures, however, are standing so that though they gaze towards this center, the lines of their bodies lead our gaze upward as well as towards the center. Then again, beside the altar is a figure with its arm pointing upward, so that our eye and imagination are not permitted to stop at the little circle. For Raphael had to bind the lower and upper parts together and make one united composition. Very easily the stretch of the sky might have

divided the whole into two parts. Lest it should, he has softened the contrast of the lower and upper curves by introducing on the one side a building, on the other a low hill with delicate trees springing upward.

Now let us pause for a moment, and observe the general effect of the lines, which we can do by turning to the skeleton drawing on transparent paper. It lays bare the plan of the composition, and we can see that it is a geometric composition of repetition and contrasts, of horizontal, vertical, diagonal and curved lines, balanced so as to unite into one single impression. To myself the impression is of looking into the interior of a circular building, with a vaulted roof. I remember just such a building in Rome; the Pantheon, built in honor of all the gods, but now, as in Raphael's time, a temple of the Church. As you enter it an altar faces you across the stretch of pavement, and the lines of the architecture, as it circles round you and above you, are very similar to these lines, while overhead the ribs or radiating lines of the vaulted ceiling suddenly stop, for there is a circular opening at the top, through which you can see the sky, and the light strikes down through it in diagonal shafts of light.

I wonder if Raphael had the Pantheon in mind when he composed this picture? Very likely, for he must have seen it; and he had a wonderful gift for receiving impressions and making use of them. And this building, both for its unusual shape and particularly from that wonderful opening, carrying

one's imagination upward from finite space to the infinite spaciousness of sky, is peculiarly impressive. It fits in also with the conception that Raphael seems to have formed of the subject which the picture commemorates.

For the name of the picture is misleading. It does not represent a dispute or argument, as the title *Disputá* would suggest. The real subject is an allegory of the Holy Catholic Church—the Church on Earth and the Church in Heaven, the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant. And it is the idea of the Church on Earth as held by the Roman Catholic Church that is represented. You may not be a Roman Catholic yourself, any more than I am, but none the less let us try to enter reverently for a few minutes into the conception of the picture, since it will help us to see how wonderfully the composition grows out of the idea.

To the Roman Catholic the highest act of worship is the service of the Mass. Here, in consequence, the altar at which it is celebrated is made the most prominent feature of the lower part of the picture. It forms, as it were, a keystone of the arch of figures; the bishops, doctors, and faithful of the Church on Earth. Their worship is directed towards the altar on which rests the receptacle in which the Sacred Bread is reserved. On earth the Church reveres the Bread as the Body of Christ; a symbol of the Body of the risen Christ in Heaven. Above the altar hovers a dove, symbol of the Holy Spirit, through whom the Words of Holy Scripture make

known the Glory of the Christ. The sacred books are borne by baby forms, "for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." Above the symbol of the Holy Spirit, sits enthroned the Christ, with hands uplifted, showing the wounds that the nails made. On one side sits the Virgin Mother, on the other, John the Baptist, who prepared the way before Him; while to right and left is a row of Apostles, Saints, and Martyrs. Above the circle of glory appears the figure of God the Father, with hands upraised in blessing. On either side of Him float angels and the sky is thick with baby faces of Cherubs and Seraphs, singing "Hosanna." Down through their midst descend shafts of golden light from the far off infinite Sun of Righteousness.

Whether or not Raphael had in mind the Pantheon, his rendering of the allegory far excels the grandeur even of the beautiful temple. For his own temple is composed of earth and sky. "The Earth is His Tabernacle," and the ceiling thereof the vault of the Heavens themselves. Suspended in it is the vision of the Holy Trinity, and the throngs of the heavenly hosts, whose praise and adoration are the mighty echo of the prayers and praises down below on earth.

Thus, you see, with what simple clearness Raphael grasped the idea that Pope Julian II asked him to commemorate. It is as logical as a proposition in geometry, and on simple principles of geometric design he built up the idea into a picture. How the simplicity of the idea has been elaborated with a

variety of beautiful thoughts, and how the simplicity of the design of the structure has been hung, as it were, with rich embroideries of detail, I must leave you to search out for yourselves. If you do, you will find that each figure represents some example of repetition or contrast, each a separate beauty and meaning.

In conclusion I will ask you one question. Do you perceive the rhythm that prevails in this balance of repetition and contrast: how from the bottom of the composition the successive waves of pattern flow upward, as the thoughts of the Faithful mount in successive waves of prayer and adoration?

## CHAPTER VI

### GEOMETRIC COMPOSITION (*Continued*)

HERE is another example of geometric composition. It is also by Raphael and is painted on one of the walls in the same room that the *Disputá* decorates. But, while the latter's geometric plan was very noticeable, this one is more disguised and the whole design has a much greater appearance of freedom. It is recognised by artists as one of Raphael's most beautiful compositions, and one of the finest examples of space decoration in existence.

But before we examine the plan on which the decoration of this space has been built up, let us study the subject. It is usually called *Jurisprudence*, that is to say the principle of Law—both the making and the administering of laws. In the *Disputá* the subject, as you remember, was *Religion*; in two of the other panels in this same room Raphael has represented *Philosophy* and *Poetry*. Here he set himself to represent the idea of *Law*. The *idea*, you observe. In all these four panels, it is an idea, not an event or incident, that is represented; but an idea—something that has existence only in the mind. For all the subjects represent abstract ideas; ideas,

that is to say, abstracted or removed from the experience of the senses. We cannot, for example, see religion or Law; nor touch, taste, smell, nor hear them. We can see the policeman on his beat, or the judge in court, or the members of the legislature—the men who, respectively, maintain, administer, and make the laws; and we can see the record of the laws in books. But the idea or principle of Law which has caused men to construct all this machinery for the making and enforcing of the laws, exists only in the mind.

Therefore, when Raphael was asked to paint the subject of *Jurisprudence* or *Law*, something that no one has ever seen or will see, what did he do? He asked himself the question: When people have a respect for Law, how does it show itself in their acts? In the first place they are very careful in the making of the laws; they found them upon the experience of the past and shape them to fit the needs of the future; they exhibit PRUDENCE. Secondly, in the enforcing of the laws, they exhibit two qualities: FIRMNESS and MODERATION. Though they firmly uphold the law, they remember that

> "earthly power doth then show likest God's
> When mercy seasons justice."

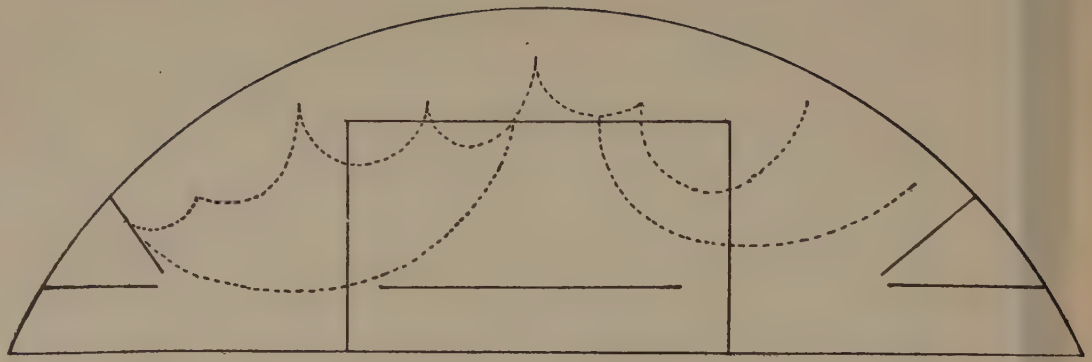
Raphael, then, determined to represent the idea of Law, by representing three of its qualities: *Prudence*, *Firmness* and *Moderation*. These three again are abstract ideas. No one has ever seen them or will see them; we can only see the results of them,

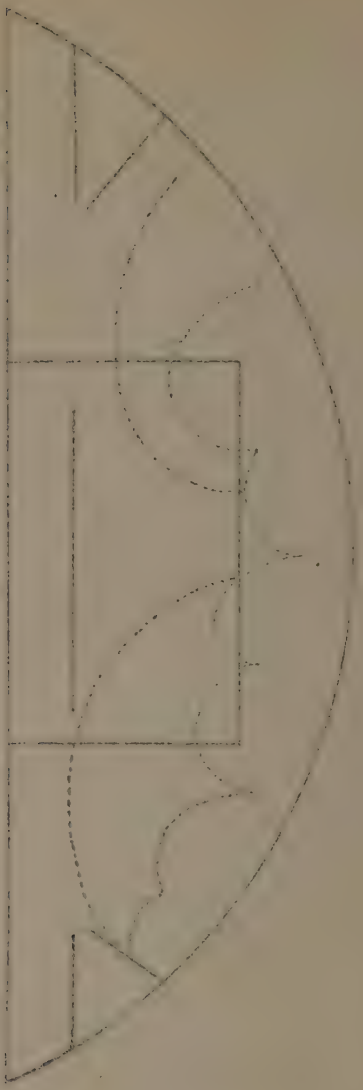
the acts which they influence man to do. So if *Prudence, Firmness* and *Moderation* have no visible shape, how could he represent them to the eye? He probably took a hint from a form of a stage play that was popular in his day. At any rate he did what the authors of these "Moralities" or "Allegories" were in the habit of doing. For they introduced as characters in their plays the Vices and Virtues; making an actor, for example, personify Gluttony or embody in his own person the idea of Gluttony. Thus, a fat man would be chosen for the part, and he would pad himself so as to look still fatter; he would make his face shining and greasy, and perhaps cover the front of his coat with grease, to suggest what a greedy and dirty feeder he was. He would come on the stage eating, and anything he had to say or do would help the audience to realise that the only thing he lived for was to stuff himself with food. This was called an embodiment or personification of Gluttony; for the idea of Gluttony was suggested in the person of the actor by the peculiarities of his body and behaviour. While the personifications of the Vices were for the most part comic, those of the virtues were beautiful or heroic, so that these Moralities or Allegories were as popular with the crowd as with people of taste. Sometimes the allegory was represented, not with figures moving about the stage, speaking and acting, but as a stationary group, in which the figures were raised on steps, so that a very imposing composition or tableau was presented. And no doubt, when these were

given on a grand scale artists often arranged the spectacle.

On the other hand, the artists were not slow to adopt the same idea in their pictures. The great altarpieces and large decorations, painted by the Italian artists of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries are to all intents and purposes allegories. Such certainly is this *Jurisprudence* of Raphael's. He has personified the three virtues of *Prudence*, *Firmness* and *Moderation.* To *Prudence* he has given two faces. One is old, for it gazes back over the long past; the other has the freshness of youth, as it peers into the future. It is looking at itself in a mirror. Why? For everything in these allegories is intended to convey a meaning to the minds of the spectators. Perhaps there are two reasons. The face is gazing at the reflection of itself, as it now is; for Prudence, besides taking note of the past and looking toward the future, must know the present. Again, since a mirror reflects what is in front of it and shows us our face as others see it, it was used by the artists as an emblem of Truth. And to know the truth is wisdom, and to act according to truth and wisdom is prudence. So, when you see a figure holding the emblem of the mirror, you may be sure the artist is personifying the idea of Truth, or Wisdom, or Prudence, or all three combined.

On the bosom of *Prudence* is a winged head; perhaps intended for the head of Medusa, which turned to stone every one who looked at it. If so, it is an





Jurisprudence. *Raphael.*

emblem here of the terribleness of *Prudence*, when offended. She is gentle in herself, but a terror to evil doers. At her side a baby form holds a torch. This was used as the emblem of that which enlightens the world—Learning; and suggests here that Prudence is illuminated by learning, perhaps also, that truth and wisdom and prudence are themselves lights which lighten the darkness of the world.

The figure to the right of the Torch-bearer offers *Prudence* a bit and reins. It is with these that men control horses; so they were adopted by painters as an emblem of control; and, knowing this, we recognise that the woman who holds them is intended to personify *Moderation*. Her whole bearing suggests modesty, which is a form of moderation, for both words imply that a person has the sense to know how far it is right to go, and where it is fit to stop.

But note the figure of the woman on the right. She is of powerful build, seated in a positive sort of attitude that has nothing of the gentle retiring character of the other figures. She is a personification of *Firmness*, armed for defense, with helmet, cuirass, and greaves. But, though she carries no weapon of offense, she holds in leash one of those pumas with which the ancients used to hunt big game. She will, if necessary, pursue and pull down the law's transgressors. Meanwhile she bears an oak branch, the emblem of strength and victory in civil life, as opposed to the laurel of war, for her victories are those of peace. The little Cupids, or *Amorini*, as

the Italians call them, except the two who carry the mirror and torch, are put in simply to increase the beauty of the composition.

I have dwelt first upon the subject of this decoration, because it is a key to so many of the old paintings and to many modern ones as well. Their subjects represent abstract ideas personified, embodied in human form; the particular idea being shown by the emblems which accompany each figure. People had come to recognise that such and such an emblem indicated such and such an idea, and, whenever a painter wished to suggest that idea, he represented a figure with the familiar emblem.

Now, too, that we have grasped the meaning of this allegory of Raphael's we can better enter into his manner of representing it. Since the idea is an abstract one, he has expressed it in an abstract way. That is to say, he has not attempted to represent real life, or the figures as doing any real thing. It is true they are life-like and their actions are quite natural; but the positions in which they have been placed were chosen in order that the arrangement of their limbs and bodies might produce an effect of beautiful rhythmic balance. Perhaps this was Raphael's only thought, for he was above everything an artist, whose work in life it is to create forms of beauty. Yet he had a mind so ready to receive all kinds of impressions that, living as he did in a very lawless age, when men were guided more by self than justice, he may have realised how beautiful would be a reign of law and order.

Anyhow, this decoration in a wonderful way possesses just those characteristics that would belong to a state of society in which justice or justness were the natural habit and not merely a thing enforced by law. How simple life would be if every man did to others what he would have them do to him, and instead of rivalry and suspicion, what a harmony there would be! It is harmony and simplicity that are the chief characteristics of this decoration.

The simplicity is very marked. There are three principal figures. I believe, if there were nothing else but these, the balance of the composition would be complete, and certainly the allegory would be explained. But balance is not necessarily harmony. In a school debate, for instance, ten of you on the right of the room may say "aye," and ten on the left may say "no," to a subject which is being discussed between you. There is a balance—ten on one side, opposed to ten on the other.

But in this decoration there is harmony. You have only to look at the picture to be sure of it. You cannot detect any rivalry between the three figures, although one of them is so much more massive than either of the other two. All of them seem drawn together into one chord of feeling, the leading note of which is the head of Prudence, lifted above the heads of her companions and seen alone against the open space of the sky and in the place of chief importance—the center of the arc of space. Please remind me presently to say a word about the placing of this head, for just now I do not wish to

interrupt the subject that we are considering—the harmony of the composition.

This is brought about particularly by the *Amorini* that, as it were, bind the three figures into a garland of festoons. Note, first, the two which are on the extreme right and left. The wing and arm of the former and the inclination of the latter's whole body suggest diagonal lines. These cut across the angles of the space, or as they say in geometry, subtend the angles; tying their two arms together and also offering a strong contrast to their direction. The baby figures also keep the composition from running away to nothing at the corners, for they serve the purpose of making the pattern curl up at each end. Or suppose we think of the pattern of the composition, as if it were partly made up of a wreath, such as we use at Christmas time to festoon our houses. Imagine a nail driven into the wall where the head of the baby on the left hand is. Attach the wreath to it. Now drive another nail into the puma's head and between this one and the first nail, let a loop of the wreath hang down so that it follows the direction of the baby's body and a bit of the oak stem. This direction, if you look at the picture, suggests a festoon. Now continue to make festoons—first along the arm of *Firmness* up to the hand of the Cupid; now another from that point along the line on the Cupid's wing and arm and up the arm of the next little figure; another from the top of the mirror, following the curve of the arm of *Prudence* up to her head. So far, on the left side of the

painting we have four small festoons. But I wonder if you can make out another one a long one, the ends of which are fastened to the head of *Prudence* and that of the baby in the left corner. It follows the slope of the figure of *Prudence* until it reaches her foot, the direction of which starts it across the gap between her and *Firmness,* where the line reappears, following the folds of the latter's drapery, at first along the floor and then above her greave up to the baby's head.

And now for the right hand side of the painting. In the first place there is a repetition of the long festoon. This one is suspended from the head of *Prudence* to the top of the wing of the Cupid in the right hand corner. It dips down along the curve of the torch, down through the folds of *Moderation's* drapery to her feet and then rises up and passes round the back of the child. But hanging above this main festoon are *two* rows of smaller ones. Firstly we find a very shallow festoon from the head of *Prudence* to the hand which holds the bit; another from this point to the top of the head of *Moderation.* Below this, however, is again a festoon from the bit, along the droop of the reins to the hand which holds them, from which point there is still another along the arm up to the head.

Now, I do not for a moment wish you to think that Raphael chose points in his composition and then arranged that the lines of the limbs and draperies should form festoons between them. In examining his work, I am trying not to tell you how

he did it, but to explain what has been done. And here, clearly visible, are what I have called, festoons. We might describe them by some other name—as ripples of movement. For as the water in some shallow brook ripples over and between the stones dancing in the sunshine, so these curves of movement, now in light and now in shadow, flow between these figures and flow over them, until the whole composition is a woven mass of rhythmic undulations. Rhythmic? Yes, it is just because these ripples or festoons present such a beautiful example of rhythm, that I have dwelt upon them. In fact it is the rhythmic movement of the composition that gives to this painting its greatest charm.

In the following chapter I shall have more to say about the rhythmic movements of the figures. Let us conclude this one with a few words about the geometric plan on which the composition of the "Jurisprudence" is based. As I have said, it is not nearly so apparent as that of the *Disputá*. The latter's plan looks as if it might have been laid out with straight edge and compasses. It was, as I have told you, adapted from a composition by Raphael's master, Perugino, and he, very possibly, may have adapted it from some one else's plan; for in those days, artists did not see any harm in starting with another man's design, and altering it a little, or perhaps making it more elaborate to suit their own purpose for the moment. But in the short time that elapsed between the painting of the *Disputá* and the *Jurisprudence* the pupil had made great strides. He

had found his own strength and was working in the glory of it. Therefore the *Jurisprudence* exhibits a freedom of design, which so disguises the ground plan, that it is difficult to be sure of what it is, although one still feels that it is geometrical.

The first thing we note is that the artist has strengthened the bottom line of the lunette by repetition. He has carried a stone bench along the entire width, which also serves as a seat for the figures. Do you see the advantage of making the figures seated? If Raphael had represented them in a standing position, he would have had to make them smaller in order to get them entirely into the space; and this would have lessened the feeling of bigness in the composition. So he invented a device by which he could represent them seated. Further, he has raised the bench in the center by the addition of another step, so as to lift the composition naturally in the part where the space to be decorated is highest.

Thus from the corners, or angles of the lunette there is on each side a gradual rise up to the head of *Prudence*, that suggests a pyramid or a triangle within the curved space. The same triangular effect is repeated in the pattern, made by the figures of *Prudence* and the Cupid who holds the torch. The curve of the torch is so arranged as to balance the slope of the woman's legs. So the geometric plan may be the repetition of a smaller, inside a larger triangle, contrasted with the curve of the lunette. On the other hand, if you look at the painting again,

you notice that the Cupid with the torch is balanced by the one who holds the mirror. Their bodies have a vertical or upright direction, and then the tops of the torch and the mirror supply points which the eye seems to join by a horizontal line, so that a rectangle occupies the center of the composition as it does in the *Disputá.* This strong contrast of a rectangular form to the curve of the lunette, and then again the contrast of the diagonal lines, formed by the Cupids' figures across the angles of the space, may be the simple geometric elements out of which this composition grew.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE ACTION, MOVEMENT AND COMPOSITION OF THE FIGURE

WHEN a few pages back I spoke of the *movement* of the figures I was using the word as artists understand it. They do not mean by it that the figure is represented as moving its limbs or body. For this they use the word "action." They speak of the action of the figure. But when they talk of "movement" they refer to the *way* in which the action is expressed. They mean that one, continuous stream of energy winds in and out through all the undulations of the action. Thus, in the figure of *Moderation*: the action consists in the fact that she is seated, with her legs extended to one side, while her body turns in the opposite direction, and while the hands are stretched out in the direction that the body faces, the head is turned away. If you compare the action of this figure with that of either of the others, you will see how much more complicated it is; how many more windings it makes. And an artist would say that this figure has a fine *movement*, because through all the windings or undulations of action one can feel a continuous stream of energy; so that every part of the figure contrib-

utes exactly its natural share to the action, and the lines of the figure, from the toe to the hand that holds the bit, flow continuously and harmoniously. The only way in which you can see for yourself how fine the movement is, is to study it very carefully, and by degrees you will begin to discover how wonderfully the flow of movement is expressed. It may help you, if you put yourself into the same position, that is to say, make your own body represent this action. At first it may seem a little awkward, but presently, as you adjust your body to the actions, you will find that it seems easy and natural, for you will have secured a perfect poise. And, after all, it is the perfect poise in the action of this figure of *Moderation* that helps to make the movements so fine.

Now turn to the figure of *Prudence*. Here the action is much simpler. The body faces in the same direction that the legs extend. But it leans back a little. If you try the action yourself, you will find it difficult, for the stretching out of the legs makes you wish to bring your body forward, so as to make the balance easy. But Raphael, knowing this, has made *Prudence* prop up her body, as it were, by leaning its weight on her left arm. Do you see how this forces up her left shoulder? The representation of this and the drawing of the arm make us feel what a pressure of weight downwards the hand has to support. Artists, you will find, usually make some one part of the figure carry the chief weight. Sometimes they may paint a standing figure in which the weight passes straight down through the figure

and is supported evenly by the two feet, like a column bearing down on to its base. But, more often, they make one leg carry the chief weight, or, as in this figure, one arm. Then it becomes very interesting; first, to study the part of chief *muscular strain*, and secondly, to note how all the other parts of the action harmonise with it. For example, in this figure of Prudence, although the arm sustains the chief pressure, a considerable amount must bear down through her trunk [1] on to the seat. But, if we compare her trunk with that of *Moderation*, I think we shall feel at once that the latter is supporting the greater weight. In fact, the point of greatest muscular action in the figure of *Moderation* is at the base of the trunk.

But to return to *Prudence*. We have noted that the left shoulder is raised higher than the right. Now observe the inclination of the head as it leans gently forward on the neck to gaze into the mirror and the easy action of the arm that holds the light mirror. Equally easy and without effort is the action of the legs. In fact, except for the firm quiet pressure on the arm, the whole figure suggests a gracious repose. Not only is the expression of the face sweetly meditative, but the same *feeling*, as the artists would say, of exquisite repose pervades the entire figure. You should learn to look for this in pictures. Do not be satisfied only with a beautiful face; but expect to find the beauty and the same

[1] The body between the neck and the commencement of the legs.

kind of beauty expressed in the action and movement of the figure. For it is in this expression of feeling that an artist shows his skill.

Compare the feeling in the figure of *Moderation.* It is no less marked, though the feeling expressed is a different one. It is also quiet and gracious, but it does not suggest repose. Corresponding with the flexible, winding movement, the feeling is rather one of reaching out, as if in pleading or tender invitation. However, it is often very difficult to explain in words just what the feeling of a figure expresses; and perhaps it is better not to try to do so. The main thing for you is to get the habit of *feeling* the feeling.

Now let us study the feeling of *Firmness.* Like that of the central figure, it suggests repose; but a repose not so much of gracious meditation, as of strength and force. In a moment, if need be, this figure would rise to its feet, thrill with alertness and put forth its strength. Meanwhile, as it sits, the line of pressure is straight down through the center of the trunk, and it is the lower muscles of the back that are supporting the chief weight. One shoulder is raised, not however, because it has to bear any pressure as in the case of the central figure, but simply because the trunk inclines a little toward the puma. Observe, though, that the head is held erect over the central line of the figure. If it were not, the feeling of firm strength in the figure would be lessened. On the other hand the face is turned to one side, in order that by its contrast of

direction the movement of the whole figure may be more effective.

For, I wonder if you have noticed that the movement in every case presents a chain of contrasts and repetitions. Start, for example, with the left foot of *Firmness*, and move your finger over the direction of the figure; first up the calf of the leg to the knee; then off toward the right to the hip; then leftward up the body, then again to the right at the slope of the shoulders; then slightly to the left up the neck, and lastly note the face turned to the right. You will have found that your finger has described a series of zig-zags. If you start with the other foot, the figure will equally present a series of zig-zags, though some differ from the former ones.

Similarly, if you begin with the foot of *Prudence*, your eye travels up to the knee; then horizontally toward the lap; next up the slight backward slope of the body; then in the opposite direction, when you reach the neck and head. The contrasts in the figure of *Moderation* are so marked, that I am sure you can make the zig-zag for yourself.

I have used the word zig-zag because I want you to feel how marked the contrasts are, and to realise that it is by means of these contrasts that an artist composes his figures. The zig-zag, however, in the actual figure has rounded angles; it is indeed rather a series of alternate curves to right and left, somewhat like the curves described by a skilful and graceful skater, cutting figures on the ice. And it is this series of curves that give the effect of rhythm as well

as harmony to the figures in this picture. For, as you may have seen for yourself, the principles on which an artist composes a single figure are the same as those he uses in the composition of several figures into one picture. He relies upon repetitions and contrasts to produce a balance, which because of its rhythm of parts shall ensure a harmonious whole.

The only difference in the case of the picture is that the composition is made up, not only of figures, but of the empty spaces of the background also. As artists would say, the composition is an arrangement of full and empty spaces; and its beauty depends upon the harmony and balance between them. In the Jurisprudence, for example, it is remarkable how the space filled by the figure of *Prudence*, corresponds in size and even in its wedge shape to the empty space formed by the upper and lower step of stonework. For the rest, the quantity of space occupied by the other two figures seems to be about equal to the empty spaces around them, though the latter, instead of being solid masses are broken up and distributed. But you will notice, how large a stretch of empty space is left at the top of the lunette, so that the eye is drawn upward and the dignity of the whole decoration thereby elevated. Note also, what a quiet impressive spot the head of Prudence makes against the background of the sky. There is, as it were, nothing to disturb its gracious repose. This device of setting a figure against the background of the sky, Raphael may have learned

from one of his masters, Perugino. At any rate, both employed it, with beautiful effect.

You may often see in nature the beauty of this effect; when, for example, on the top of some rising ground a tree, or a figure, or a church spire, stands against the sky. If the object is motionless, it seems to become more impressive because of the vastness of the sky. Or, should the objects be children at play (I can remember a picture of this), then their sport seems to take on more joyousness, freedom, and buoyancy, from the vastness of the sky.

And now, a short description of the way in which this decoration was painted. It is what is called "fresco," an Italian word that means "fresh." The name is used because the painting is done while the plaster of the wall is still fresh, that is to say, not "set" or dry. The following is the process. The wall was first covered, as in our houses to-day, with a coat of rough-cast plaster, which was allowed to dry thoroughly. In the meanwhile the artist had prepared full-sized drawings of his figures. As soon as he was ready, a thin coating of smooth-finish plaster was spread over such portion of the lunette as he could paint in a day. Upon this the drawing was placed and an assistant would go over all the lines with a blunt-pointed tool, pressing hard enough on the paper to leave a mark in the plaster underneath. There, when the paper was removed, appeared the figure, enclosed in grooved lines. Then the artist set to work and laid in the color, using paint that was mixed, not with oil, but with water

to which some gluey substance was added. The plaster, you remember, was still damp, but since it contained plenty of cement, dried or "set" quickly, and as it dried, the paint dried with it, and became a part of the plaster. When it was done, the artist, if he wished, could add a few decisive strokes. The following day another portion of the lunette would be treated in the same manner and so on until the whole was painted. It is a method, you see, that left the artist no chance of fumbling over his work. He had to make up his mind beforehand exactly what he meant to do, and to do it quickly. Hence, with an artist so skilled as Raphael, the work has the extra charm that belongs to what has been done easily and fluently. You know how much pleasanter it is to listen to an easy, fluent speaker than to one who hesitates and corrects himself continually. So, too, in a work of art, the feeling that it has grown easily under the artist's hand adds to our enjoyment of it. It seems to be a spontaneous expression of himself.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE CLASSIC LANDSCAPE

WE have seen in the previous chapters how Raphael built up composition from a simple geometric plan, on the principles of repetition and contrast, rhythmically balanced. Other Italian artists worked upon the same lines, and with such skill and grandeur of invention that the Italian pictures, especially of the Sixteenth Century, are still considered the finest examples of this sort of composition. It is distinguished by being what we may call "formal," or "conventional."

The figures are arranged, that is to say, not as you would be likely to see them in actual life, but according to a rule or formula or convention. The idea has been not to represent a real scene, but to display the figures and their surroundings in such a way as to produce an effect of beauty; sometimes a simple one, more often one of great impressiveness or magnificent splendor. The figures and other objects have been so arranged and so drawn as to furnish an orderly pattern of beauty and dignity. The subjects of the pictures might be taken from the Bible story or from the legends of ancient Greece, or be simply invented to set forth the pride that the

people took in their cities—the pomp and glory of Venice, for example. But, no matter what the subject might be, the aim of the artist was first and foremost to paint a thing of beauty. And in this search for beauty he soon discovered how much depended upon the surroundings of his figures and the objects that he introduced.

When he desired the simpler kind of beauty he set his figures in lovely landscape scenery with hills and trees and winding streams; when he was bent on grander effects, he added architectural settings. For the architects of that day were erecting noble buildings with columns and arches, vaulted roofs and domes; partly in imitation of the remains of Roman architecture, but also designed in a fresh spirit of invention to fit the new purposes for which the buildings were required. Thus arose that vast temple of the Roman Church, St. Peter's. It is what is called a classic building; because its style is in many respects like that of the old classic Roman temples, which in their turn had represented a new use of the still older classic style of Greek architecture.

The painters, then, inspired by the work of the architects, discovered how much dignity they could give to their own compositions by introducing architectural features. Sometimes they would introduce columns, or a flight of steps or a balustrade, sometimes a whole building; or represent the figures grouped in a street or square, surrounded by buildings, or often inside a building, standing under a

vaulted ceiling. These are only a few of the architectural features, so freely used by the Italian painters. Let us study their value to the composition.

Some people who live in country homes are fond of flowers. They grow cluster-roses, honeysuckle, wistaria and other long-armed climbing plants over their verandahs. If they are fond of gardening and not satisfied merely with a lawn and a few shrubs, they will erect arches and trellis-work on which vines may cling and cluster. In the first place, they know that these slender, straggling plants will thrive better, if they have some support; they will not be so torn by the buffets of the wind, and their limbs and leaves and flowers will get more sunshine. Secondly, they will show to better advantage, because of the contrast of their winding, wreathing forms and irregular masses with the firm, strong, simple lines of the verandah or trellis-work. United they form a prettier composition, than would the vines and cluster-roses, if huddling in an unsupported tangle.

The principle is the same in the composition of a picture, where the vines are represented by the action of the figures. To their irregular masses of drapery and undulating lines of limbs the architecture presents at once the contrast and support of decided lines and clearly defined masses. And since the classic style of architecture, which was used, is so noble, it added nobility to the composition. Even the penny photographs of the Italian pictures will prove to you that this is so. Study them and find this out for yourselves.

Now, the example of the Italians, in this respect, was followed by other nations, especially the French. The latter continue to this day the painting of beautiful pictures in which the figures are combined with landscape and architecture. And our own American artists are doing the same thing, as you can see if you have a chance of visiting the Library of Congress, at Washington, or any other of the public buildings throughout this country, in which the walls have been decorated with mural paintings.[1]

So far we have been speaking of the use of architecture to support the figures. In time, however, artists found a new use for it. They employed it to support the landscape; which brings us to a talk about what is called the "Classic Landscape."

Nowadays, when so many artists paint nothing else but landscape pictures, it may seem strange that the Italians of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries used landscape only as a support for the figures. It was not because they were blind to the beautiful scenery of their own country, for, when they did introduce it into their pictures, they represented it in a very lovely way. But always as a background to the figures, which you are made to feel are the principal features of the picture. The reason is that the public for whom they painted demanded figure subjects. The Church required pictures that would bring home to the hearts of the people who could not read the beauty of the Bible

[1] Mural—(Latin *murus*, a wall), having to do with a wall; in this case a decoration on a wall.

The Manitou Lunette. *E. H. Blashfield.*

Story; rich men and women wished to decorate their palaces with scenes from the old Greek legends; while cities adorned their public buildings with allegorical subjects in which the pride they took in their own municipal life was set forth in figures, personifying the character of its greatness. Moreover, those were stirring times in which the rivalry between the cities and between the noble families led to constant wars and plottings. Men, beginning as nobodies, rose rapidly to power. Not, as they do to-day in our country, by using their brains and energy in the peaceful pursuits of industry and trade and learning; but through brute force, guided by brains that schemed to win by fraud and violence. So it was man that, as we say, cut the chief figure in these times; man's power and woman's beauty. Mankind was so interested in itself that it spared little thought for the beauty of nature. It is true that architects built noble houses on sites commanding beautiful views and laid out the gardens with fountains, trees and flowers. Even this however, was for the glorification of some man or woman. But the love of nature which leads artists to paint landscapes and the public to value such pictures is a different thing. In the love of nature man forgets himself; he is absorbed in the beauty of the natural world outside himself; he is fond of nature for its own sake.

It was not until the Seventeenth Century that artists began to study and paint the landscape in this spirit. When they did so, the landscape took the

first place in their pictures, and the figures, if any were introduced, became the unimportant features, kept small and put in merely to enliven the scene. By this time landscape painting, as a subject distinct in itself, branched out into two directions—the *naturalistic* and the *formal*. The *naturalistic* was practised by the Dutch artists, who painted the out of door life and appearance of Holland so truthfully, that to-day when we look at their pictures we can see the meadows and streams, the mills and the farms, exactly as they were three hundred years ago. But the subject of natural landscape we will study later on.

The other kind of landscape I have called *formal* because, instead of being drawn directly from nature, it was made up, like the Italian figure pictures, according to a rule or formula or convention. Just as in those pictures the figures were represented as grander and more beautiful than people usually are in real life, and were arranged for the purpose of a handsome composition in attitudes that people do not usually assume, so with the formal landscapes. The artists tried to make them more grand and imposing than ordinary nature, and composed them according to an artificial plan. They did not in their picture represent any real scene in nature, but built up a number of natural details into a composition, constructed on a geometric plan. And especially they introduced details of classic architecture; so that these formal designs are often called *classic* landscapes.

If you turn to the illustration you will see at once that the artist has not represented the natural landscape. The very title, *Dido Building Carthage,* shows the classic influence. The subject is taken from Virgil's Æneid, Book I, line 420. Turner, the great English artist, who in 1815 painted this picture, had never seen Carthage; nor had he ever seen any spot on earth like the one represented here. What he had seen was the work of Claude Lorrain, a French artist of the Seventeenth Century, who lived in Italy and invented this kind of landscape. Turner himself preferred to paint the natural landscape; but, since the people of his own day admired the *classic* landscape of Claude and his followers, he wished to prove that he also could paint like Claude, if he chose; and as well as the French artist. Therefore, when he died, he left this picture and another classic landscape, *The Sun rising in a Mist* to the National Gallery, on condition that they should be hung alongside of two by Claude Lorrain. So, while studying this picture we are really studying the principles on which Claude built up the *classic* landscape, and on which his followers worked for nearly two hundred years, until the love of nature won out and the *naturalistic* landscape took its place.

The geometric plan of this picture is very simple. You can discover it by joining the upper and lower opposite corners by two diagonal lines that cut each other in the center. This produces four triangles; of which the top is given to the sky, the bottom to the water, and the two sides to the land and build-

ings and trees. Sky and water occupy more space than the other two parts; but since the latter are filled with details of bold design, they attract extra attention, so that the balance between the full and empty spaces is kept true.

The balance is a harmonious one. You will perhaps realise better what this means if you think for a moment of a balance that is not harmonious; for instance of a pair of hanging scales, in one pan of which there is a flat round one pound weight, exactly balancing a pound of candy in the other pan. We should not call this a harmonious balance. If we examine why it is not, it will help us to understand the meaning of harmony in composition. The reason is that there is no relation between the box of candy and the one pound weight, except that each weighs the same. On the other hand, in the picture every detail has some relation to the other details, and all are related to the whole. The whole, in fact, is a woven mass of contrasts and repetitions, in exact relation; very much as a composition of music is made up of exactly related contrasts and repetitions of sound notes. Alter one of these and there will be a discord, unless some other notes are altered to restore the harmony. Similarly if the artist had altered the shape of one of the details in his picture, or its color, or its lightness or darkness, there would have been a discord in the effect of his picture; it would no longer present the appearance of perfect oneness. He would have to alter some other parts to restore the harmony.

In studying the picture to try and discover how the effect of harmony is produced we find ourselves studying the contrasts and repetitions of which it is composed. And, first the contrasts. One big one is the contrast of the architecture with everything else in the picture—the contrast of these quiet stately masses, which seem so firm and strong, compared with the shimmering surface of the water and the tremulous mistiness of the sky; the contrast also of their decided lines with the irregular spotting of the figures, and with the irregular masses of the trees and foliage. The big tree, although it is motionless in the quiet air, seems as if a breeze would stir it; the water has ripples of motion; some of the figures appear to be moving, while others are only still for the moment, and the sky—it is palpitating with the actual stir of the atmosphere, as the upper air gradually cools and draws up the warmer air from below, and this warmer air cools into mistiness. But the buildings stand immovable and solid. While all around them either moves or could move, they seem to suggest the force and permanence of what does not change. Or perhaps we may feel that grand as the buildings are, stately and magnificent, yet the sky is lovelier, for the buildings are limited to their one size and shape, while the sky seems a part of that which has no limits or boundaries. It draws off our imagination into the mystery of distance and of the unknown. So the impressions which the contrast of the architecture arouses are not only such as the eye can see, but such also as the imagi-

nation can feel. This, no doubt, is one of the secrets of the pleasure which so many people have found and still find in *classic* landscapes.

And now for another series of contrasts: those supplied by the lights and darks. In the original picture these contrasts would depend partly on the color of the various objects; but here, in the black and white reproduction, we may think of the pattern simply as one of very dark spots and very light ones, threaded together by others of varying depths of greyness. Again, what an important part the sky plays! It is a flood of light, against which everything forms a silhouette,[1] more or less dark, relieved by spots and streaks of light. The water, but for the pathway of reflection, is shrouded in shadow. Shadow, too, is wrapping itself round the tall building on the left, and slumbers drowsily among the trees on the opposite hill slopes. The artist, you will notice, has varied the distribution of shadows. On the left the gradation from very dark to very light is continuous. It is as if the first building struck a loud strong note, and the sound gradually diminished toward the distance. On the right, however, the foreground is lighter, and the dark gradually increases, swelling up, as they say in music, in a *crescendo* effect and then passing in a *diminuendo* far off into the distance. In fact, on both sides of

[1] In 1759 a M. de Silhouette was minister of finance, and he was so economical that the French used his name as a nickname for cheap things, among others for the profile portraits cut out of black paper, which were then popular. In time, the word came to be used for any dark mass seen against a light one.

Dido Building Carthage. *J. M. W. Turner.*

the picture the arrangement of dark and light is rhythmical. I have only touched upon the broad general plan of contrasted darks and lights, and must leave you to study for yourselves the intricate and subtle effects with which the picture abounds; for example, the fine threads and little dots of light and dark that form a tangle on the left bank; or, on the right, the mass of leafage in half shadow against which the trunk of the tree shows very dark. You know the old proverb about leading a horse to the water. I can draw your attention to these things, but I can not make you feel their beauty. I think, however, I can promise you, that, if you are sufficiently interested in what we are talking about to really study this picture, to explore carefully the lighter parts and peer into the shadows to see what lurks within them, its beauty will make itself known to you.

As I myself am examining a black and white reproduction of this picture, that lies before me while I write these lines, there is music coming from the next room. It has stopped, and I wish it would begin again; for music seems to fit in with the impressions that this picture stirs in my imagination. Nor is this merely a fanciful idea. Music is one art and painting is another. They are different, it is true, but yet are sisters with much in common. And why not? For they come from the same parents—the hand and the mind of man. And through the harmony of the light and dark of which this picture is composed there floats, it seems to me,

the fancy of a melody. I think it comes from out the endless distance of that sky; gently floating toward us, and crooning over the objects in the foreground, as a mother murmurs a lullaby over her baby while it falls asleep. But it is not altogether crooning, for see that tree's dark, round mass of tone! How it thumps itself into our notice, while its force spreads up the hill, and then leaps across the water, and stirs with a different kind of energy in the dark building on the left. There is nothing of the feebleness and the helplessness of a baby in this picture. It suggests rather, big and mighty effort, growing toward the time of rest. It is not the music of a lullaby I seem to hear, but the evening hymn of sturdy workers as they cease for a little from their toil.

## CHAPTER IX

### NATURALISTIC COMPOSITION

IN the preceding chapters we have been studying *formal*, or *conventional*, composition. We have seen how the artists arrange their groups of figures and the position and gestures of each figure according to a rule or formula or convention, the basis of which is a geometric plan, on which they build up a balance of repetitions and contrasts. And we have noted that these formal compositions are artificial arrangements: that the figures are not grouped as you might expect them to be in real life, nor in positions that men and women usually assume. And these formal compositions we have seen were also called, *classic*; the last example being the *classic landscape* in which nature has been made to look more grand by the addition of features of classic architecture.

We reach now another principle of composition. It is the arrangement adopted by the artist, whose motive is to make his picture represent nature naturally; so I call it *naturalistic composition*. But, as we have noted before, the artist is not satisfied merely to represent nature; he wishes in the first place to make his picture a thing of beauty. Nature

is not always beautiful; so he selects from nature and arranges his subject in such a way, that we shall not only recognise how true the picture is to nature, but feel also how beautiful it is as a work of art. Its beauty, you see, is founded, not upon a formal plan, but on its truth to nature.

Here for example, is *The Sower* by the French artist, Jean François Millet. If we have ever seen a man scattering grain, we recognise at once the picture's truth to life. But Millet's intention was not only to make us know what the man is doing, but to create an impression on our minds that shall make us feel a sense of beauty, through the way in which the picture represents the incident. As a young man, Millet had studied the examples of Greek and Roman sculpture in the Museum of the Louvre in Paris, and learnt through them the classic principles of composition—the balance obtained by rhythmical repetition and contrast. And these principles, as we shall see presently, are applied to this figure of *The Sower*. I hope to show you that this is the secret of the picture's beauty. Although the *action* of the figure inside the shabby clothes is quite natural, the *movement* is rhythmical. In fact it represents a mixture of the *classical* and the *naturalistic* motive.

Firstly, the *naturalistic*. We know at a glance what the man is doing. The forms in the picture, the colors, the light and shade, make an impression on the eye which is immediately telegraphed to one of the centers of the brain. The result is that we know the picture represents a man in a field sowing

grain, while from the color and light in the sky, and the shadows creeping over the field, we know that it is twilight.

This direct thought stirs us to further thinking; for we recall that laborers start for their work in early morning, so this one has probably been toiling all through the day. But we notice that his actions are still vigorous, he should be tired, yet he is working as sturdily as at any time during the day; perhaps with even more energy, in order that he may finish sowing the field before the darkness comes. In fact, the arrangement of forms, colors, and light and shade has made a strong impression on the thinking part of the brain, stirring us not only to observe, but to draw conclusions. And this, of course, is what Millet meant that it should do.

But this was not all that he intended. Most people of his day must have thought it was; for nearly all the critics, or persons who are supposed to be able to judge of the value of a picture, and nearly all the connoisseurs, who are supposed to be able to appreciate its beauty, turned up their noses and shrugged their shoulders. "This is horrible!" they exclaimed. "A common laborer in his dirty clothes, doing his miserable work. Ugh! how vulgar! This is not art; for art should be concerned with beauty. Why does not the fellow paint some beautiful girl in beautiful draperies? Phew! Take the picture away, it smells of the farm."

You see they confined their criticisms and appreciation to what the picture was about—its subject;

and because they did not like the subject, they condemned the picture. They got no further than *knowing* and *thinking*, they did not permit themselves to *feel*. But it was on their feelings also that Millet wished to make an impression. Through the arrangement of line, form, color, and light and shade he sought to stir that other part of the brain to which messages are telegraphed by the senses, with a result that we are made to *feel*. Let us analyse the composition; and see how it illustrates the principle that we have been discussing of balance, and rhythmic repetition, and contrast.

We will begin with the latter. Note, then, how the sloping line of the field cuts across the picture. This diagonal line is contrasted with the perpendicular sides of the picture, and with the upright direction of the figure of the man. It forms, however, another contrast; it divides the light from the dark. The sun has gone down behind the slope; so that, while the sky is still luminous with a lovely glow, the ground is in shadow, dreary and heavy looking. So, too, the figure of the man. The light is at his back, so that what we see of him is shrouded in gloom. Against the gloom of the ground his figure shows comparatively indistinctly, but the upper part stands very sharp against the light. There is a strong contrast between its heaviness and gloom and the lovely radiance of the waning light; while down below the figure looms out of the gloom and heaviness, as if it were a part of them that had gathered into definite shape. Yes, though his head

may stand against the sky, the man is part of the earth.

Right away, is there nothing in this to make us feel? Millet, at any rate, had often felt the poignancy of contrast, in his own life and in the lives of others. He had known what it was to see his wife and children short of food, to have his own stomach empty, while his mind was full of beautiful ideas, and his cottage full of pictures, that some day men would buy, but not yet. He had seen little bright faced children standing at the open grave of the father or the mother; the happy young bride at the altar, and among the congregation the young widow; and evening after evening, as the darkness fell, the lonely figures in the field, toiling out their short lives, whilst behind them spread the everlasting beauty of the sunset, and a few miles off in Paris, where he came from, the lights were gleaming and people were making ready for pleasure, though there too, as he knew from his own experience, people starved. Yes, it is through experience that we learn to feel deeply, and it is to experience that the contrast of this picture appeals.

When we recognise that by this contrast of light and darkness, Millet sought to express the dreary routine, day in day out, early and late, of the peasant's lot in a world where nature is so beautiful, and there can be so much beauty in life, we may imagine to ourselves what would be the effect of raising or lowering the diagonal line. To have given more lighted space, would have made the figure stand

out too prominently so that it would have dominated the scene, and the scene itself would have seemed too spacious. Velasquez, in his equestrian portraits, kept the horizon line low, so that *Philip IV*, for example, or his minister, *Olivarez*, is made to appear a very important person in a very large world. But Millet wished us to feel the lowliness of the peasant, bound close to the earth in very narrow surroundings. Again, to have raised the horizon line, would have destroyed the balance between light and darkness, which now is absolutely true. This balance suggests a feeling of repose; shall I say of acquiescence in the necessity of the contrast? For Millet did not consider himself a reformer whose work is to set things right and to do away with contrasts; but an artist, whose aim was to harmonise the contrasts and to find some balance between the lights and darks of life; just as Stevenson out of his weakness and strength made his life a beautiful one.

And now let us study the lines of the figure. In the first place you will agree that they enclose a form which is unmistakably that of a man sowing grain. It was necessary for Millet to arrange the lines, in some way that should convey this impression. But there are many other ways in which they might have been arranged, so as to obtain this result. For in the act of sowing a man takes many positions and any one of these would have done, if all the artist had desired was to make us *know* that the man was sowing. But Millet wished to do more.

As a boy he toiled in his father's fields, so he had

The Sower. *J. F. Millet.*

a fellow-feeling for the peasants; and as he watched them, day after day laboring so faithfully, he found a big idea in their work. It was something like this—work is necessary, and to do our own share of it as well as we can is the big thing for each of us. And the oldest work of all and the most necessary is the growing of the wheat. To-day the seed is laid in rows by machine-drills; but in Millet's time it was scattered by hand, just as it had been since man began to sow. This sower, then, that he watched was a descendant of a long line of sowers, stretching back to the beginning of civilisation; and still in the fields of Barbizon he was doing his humble share of the world's necessary work. Millet felt the bigness of this idea; and in his imagination the man was no longer Jacques or Jean—a sower; he became "The Sower," a type—a big heroic type. Then, as Millet felt him to be, so he set to work to paint him, choosing such lines as would convey this big feeling to us. Observe, first, the balance of the figure: how the weight of the body is planted almost equally on both feet. If you try to put yourself in the position, you will find that you can raise neither foot without moving the body. If you wish to raise the back foot, you must move the body forward till the weight is on the right foot; or, if you would raise this latter, you must move the body back till the weight is over the left foot. The center of gravity or of mass runs down through the body and between the legs. Now sway your body backward and forward a few times, and then bring forward the left leg in front of the

right, so that the position of the feet is reversed. Now sway again forward and backward. I ask you to do this that you may feel how freely the body moves in this position. And I ask you to stride, that you may feel that the position in the picture is only a momentary one, leading on to a natural advance. For this perfect poise of the body on the feet is not a stationary one, that in time will seem stiff, but part of a moving one, that has the freedom and the naturalness of life. And the movement is a swift one. We can feel it is so from the length of the stride; for it is only when you are moving quickly, that you can take long strides, and still preserve the balanced, rhythmic swing of the body.

We have spoken of the poise of the body on the legs; now let us note the action of the right arm. The action, I need hardly say, begins with taking a handful of grain from the bag; then the arm is swung back to the right to its full extent, and then again brought back to the bag. Between these two points—that of the bag and that of the full extent—the arm is poised in motion, just as the action of the body was poised between the backward and forward motion of the legs. We can feel that the arm is moving, and, at this instant it is moving backward, for our own experience when we walk and swing our arms naturally is that each arm goes back as the leg on that side goes forward. The man's arm will reach its furthest point backward when he brings his full weight on the right foot. In a word, the poise of the arm and the poise of the leg correspond.

They present an example of repetition of balance. It is enforced, you will observe, in the composition by the arm being made parallel to the direction of the backward leg. This is another instance of repetition; and there are still others: the repetitions of the waist line, the shoulders, and the hat brim; of the bandage on the left leg, the line from the shoulder through the thigh, the apron, hanging over the arm, and of the echo, as it were, of these, in the tail of the distant ox and the arm of the driver. These repetitions, and others that you may discover for yourself, help to bind the composition together and also to make it rhythmic.

And now for contrast, we have noted the big one made by the diagonal line, dividing the composition into light and dark. Let us note those appearing in the figure. First there is the big contrast of the figure's own diagonal line from the shoulders down through the right leg. It is contrasted most forcibly with the sides of the picture, the horizon line, and the direction of the right arm and the left leg. The latter are practically at right angles to the figure—strongest of all contrasts of line. It is to all these vigorous contrasts that the energy and assertion of the figure are mainly due. But there are other contrasts in the figure. Do you notice that the swing of the arm brings the trunk of the body, or the torso, as it is called, along with it? Swing your own arm and you will find your torso following its direction. If the man's arm were to reach its full extension, his left shoulder would appear and his torso would

front us nearly full. If his hand should reach the bag, the right shoulder would come forward until the torso would be seen almost in profile. However, neither of these extremes is presented. The swing of the torso is poised between the two. But do you observe that the swing of the torso and arms is across the path of direction of the swing of the legs? While they swing forward and backward, the arms and torso swing alternately from right to left and left to right.

Imitate this action with your own body, step forward briskly with a swinging stride and at the same time swing your arms and torso. If you feel the exhilaration of the action as I think you will, you will realise that it is the wonderful way in which Millet has suggested this contrast of the swing, that makes the action of the figure so stirring. By the contrast of its lines, it expresses energy; by the contrast of swing, so free, so rhythmic, so vigorous, it lifts us to enthusiasm.

But finally observe the position of the head and the direction of its gaze. While below it the torso and arms swing from side to side, the head is fixed, leaning a little forward in the direction of the onward movement, its eyes firmly set on what is ahead. Within the head is the brain which directs all the action of the figure. But the face is shadowed over, and through the shadow the features appear coarse and heavy. We feel that the brain, though prompting the man to do his work to the utmost, is after all a dull brain, in pitiful contrast to the vigor of

the body. Heroic though the figure is in the grandeur of its free, swift movement, as grand, if you will take my word for it, as a Greek statue, yet it is but that of a humble peasant, unconscious that he is doing aught but that which he has to do.

There you have the idea as it presented itself to the imagination of Millet!

"The Sower" is a striking illustration of the point with which I started this book; that the beauty of a picture does not depend upon the subject, but upon the way it is represented.

## CHAPTER X

### NATURALISTIC COMPOSITION (*Continued*)

IN *The Sower*, by Millet, we found that, though the composition was naturalistic, it was based upon the classic principle of rhythm of line. We shall not discover this principle in the present picture of a *Young Woman Opening a Window*. The arrangement of the figure and its surroundings is simply natural.

The picture is by Johannes Vermeer [1] of Delft, so called because this town in Holland was his birthplace and the scene of his life's work. Born in 1632, he is one of those famous Dutch artists of the Seventeenth Century, of whom I have already spoken. We were talking of landscape painting and mentioned that in this century the art branched out in two directions. Landscape up to that time having been used as a background for figures, became then an independent art, cultivated for its own sake; and the artists treated it in two ways. On the one hand, some applied the principles of geometric composition to an artificial building up of bits of nature into what is called the formal, or classic landscape; while other painters represented the natural landscape

[1] Pronounced Yo-hann-es Fair-mair.

naturally. These latter were the Dutchmen, who treated figures also in the same realistic spirit. That is to say, whether they painted portraits or figure pictures or landscapes, their aim was to represent the actual subject as they really saw it. They did not substitute an artificial arrangement for the natural appearance of people and things; nor did they try to obtain beauty by altering and improving upon nature. Their motive or purpose was to render the beauty that is actually in nature. So, for the most part, they chose subjects of familiar every day life.

This picture, for example, represents simply a glimpse of home life, of a Dutch girl in well-to-do circumstances. Perhaps the artist intended to make a portrait of her; probably his intention was only to paint a genre picture, that is to say, an incident of every day life. Not so much, however, for the sake of representing the incident, as of making it contribute to a subject of abstract beauty. How he has done this I hope we shall see presently. Meanwhile, I want you to grasp the distinction between simply representing an incident, as you or I might have seen it, if we had been present, and Vermeer's motive of using the incident as a peg on which to hang some beauty of light and color and texture. I mean, it was the beauty of light and color and texture that made him pleased to paint this picture; and probably he would have been just as pleased if some other girl had been standing there, or some other objects had been spread upon the table.

Perhaps a familiar example will illustrate this

distinction. Two people start off for an afternoon's walk. One sets out because he wishes to call upon a friend who lives on the other side of the wood. To pay this call is the object of his walk; for the friend is building a new house. As he walks along he is busy wondering how far it is advanced, whether the plasterers have finished their work; and as he returns home he is thinking about the house he has seen and how he himself, when he builds a house of his own, will plan it differently. In fact, the incident of his friend's being engaged in building is what interests him, and has been throughout the afternoon the motive of his walk. His companion, on the other hand, agrees to go along with him, not so much because he is interested in the house, although he is to some extent, but mostly because he loves a walk. He enjoys the exhilaration of the exercise; he is fond of the wood through which they have to pass. He will have a chance to hunt for the first signs of spring—the early skunk-cabbage, the shy peep of the violet through the dead leaves underfoot, the rose blush of the maples overhead, the piping and flicker of the first bird-arrivals and so on. The real motive of his walk is the joy of exercise and of the beauties met with on the way. Visiting the house was but an excuse.

There is the same distinction among painters. To some the representation of the incident is the main thing; to others, the rendering of the beauties which it involves. Vermeer, like the other Dutch artists, of the Seventeenth Century, belonged to the latter

Young Woman Opening a Window. *Johannes Vermeer.*

*(Property of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.)*

class. Since, however, his subject is the peg on which he hangs his arrangement of light and color, let us begin by examining it.

A young woman is standing between a table and a window. With one hand she opens the casement while the other grasps the handle of a brass pitcher that stands in an ewer of the same material. Perhaps she is going to water some flowers that are outside on the window sill. Her costume consists of a dark blue skirt, buff-colored bodice, and a broad collar and hood-like cap of thin white linen. The table is covered with an oriental cloth, on which is a yellow jewel case, while over the blue chair lies a cloak of lighter blue. On the gray wall hangs a map. This and the table cloth may remind us, that the Dutch of that period, although they were fighting for their political liberty against Spain, found means to build ships and carry on trade across the sea with far distant countries. Possibly the girl was the daughter of some sea-captain or prosperous merchant.

Anyhow the picture, beside being a beautiful painting, is very interesting to us to-day as an illustration of the domestic life of a Dutch girl of some two hundred and fifty years ago. And the same interest belongs to all the old genre pictures. They make the past still alive to our eyes; just as the genre pictures painted to-day will show some future generation how we lived. But this, I repeat, was not Vermeer's first thought. On the other hand, I do not wish you to think that he was not himself

interested in the subject of his picture. He was, I am sure; but in another way. He, no doubt, arranged the figure with great care and carefully selected and grouped the surrounding objects. But, in placing the girl, he did not try to get the graceful lines that Raphael, for example, would have imagined. Vermeer's desire was to keep the pose and gesture natural. In this he was simply following the general motive of the artists of his country and of that time. But his own particular motive in representing the girl in the act of opening the window was that the clear outside light might stream in at the back of her figure and blend with the dimmer light of the interior.

I said that we would study the kind of beauty that this picture possesses; and it is to be found in the rendering of the light. The Italians, busy with their grand classic compositions, would not have thought of this. Their motive was the beauty of form, arrayed in beautiful draperies, and so arranged that the figures should produce beautiful patterns of line and form. To make a motive of the beauty of natural light was a discovery of the Dutch.

They were artists, you see, and therefore in love with beauty. But they confined themselves, almost entirely, to real subjects of every day life, and accordingly had to find out the beauty that may be in these familiar things. And it was not long before they learned how much the beauty of things depends upon the light in which they are seen.

Before we go any further in our study of the

picture, let us see if we cannot be sure of this from our own experience. Whether you live in a city or in the country, how differently you feel when you start out in the morning, according as the day is fine or not. Under a bright sky everything takes on a cheerfulness that is communicated to our own spirit. Let the sky become downcast and the appearance of objects becomes dulled. Often too, some familiar object that we have passed time and time again without particular notice, suddenly attracts us. How beautiful! we exclaim. If we try to discover the reason of the beauty, we shall find very likely, that it is due to some effect of light. It need not be a bright light, on the contrary, it may be a soft light, such as wraps itself around objects like a gauzy veil, when the sky is thick with vapor. Do you remember that line of Tennyson's—"Waves of light went over the wheat"? He had been watching a field of wheat, spread out smoothly like a pale golden carpet in the yellow sunshine. Suddenly, a soft breeze passes over it, and as the stems bend their heavy heads of grain, and recover themselves, ripples of light travel across the field. The poet notes it in his memory, for a future poem. So, if we use our eyes, we may note countless examples of the beauty which is added to the simplest things by light. In fact, the changing effect of light will correspond to the changing expressions that pass over the human face.

The Dutch artists, as soon as they became really interested in the nature and life around them,

quickly recognised this fact, and made it the chief motive of their pictures. They were no longer satisfied with mere realism; that is to say, to make the figure and the objects around it look as real in the pictures as they did in actual reality. They sought to render the expression of which these objects were capable, under the influence of light. If you do not understand this I think you will, if you place a bunch of flowers in some dark corner of the room, look at it a little while, and then move it to the window. Now, as the light falls upon the flowers and shines through the petals, the whole bunch is transfigured. It has taken on a new appearance of beauty. Like a face that has suddenly lighted up with an expression of happiness, the flowers seem alive with radiance. They too, have their expression and it will change with the changing of light. For look at them again toward evening, when the light is low, and their faces, not less beautiful, will show a quite different expression.

Now the light which streamed in at that window in Delft, when Vermeer painted this picture, was a very cool, pure light; one would say, from seeing the original picture, a morning light in Spring, it is so pure and fresh and fragrant. Yes, one can even feel the fragrance of its freshness, so exquisitely has the artist suggested to us the impression of the lighted air that steals into the room, filling it with purity. See, how it bathes the wall; even the bare gray becomes radiant; how it gleams on the girl's shoulder, and filters through her cap, making it in

parts transparent, so that one sees the background color through it. Note also, how it roams among the objects in the room, caressing the under part of the girl's right arm, bringing out the softness and plumpness of her left wrist; splashing the ewer and touching the pitcher, the table cloth, and other details with glints of sparkle, like notes of gladness in a melody of tender freshness.

Even in the reproduction one can feel the freshness that pervades the room, and the delicate quality of the lighted atmosphere that envelopes the figures and fills every part of the scene. I mean, that not only is this effect of light visible to our eyes, but it also stirs in us a sentiment or feeling of gladness and refreshment. Still more will the original, if you have a chance of seeing it in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, where, though a very small picture, it is one of the gems of the collection. For there you will feel also the effect of the color, yellow, gray, and various hues of blue. They are all cool colors, the blues especially, and very pure in hue, which increases the sensation of freshness.

A moment ago I spoke of the picture as being like a melody. It will suggest to some imaginations the blitheness of a spring-song. The fact that a painting may sometimes seem to have the tunefulness or harmony of music I have already mentioned in a previous chapter. The reason is that painting and music, although different arts, have certain elements in common. Later on, when we shall speak of color, I shall try to suggest to you the correspondence be-

tween sound notes in music and color notes in painting. But for the present I will remind you of an element, common to both arts, of which we have already spoken—rhythm. In Raphael's *Jurisprudence*, I pointed out to you the rhythm of movement in the figures. It flows through the forms of the figures in rippling, wave-like lines of direction. But nothing of that sort is apparent in Vermeer's picture. There are repetitions and contrasts in the arrangement of the full and empty spaces; but they represent rather a pattern of spots; we are not conscious of any rhythm of line. Then, in what does the rhythm consist?

If you think of that line of Tennyson's—"Waves of light went over the wheat," you may perhaps discover for yourselves the kind of rhythm in this picture. To give you time to think it out, before I tell you, let me ask you, if you have noticed that in a flower-bed in the garden a number of blossoms of different colors will "dwell together in unity," but if you pick some of these and bring them indoors and begin to arrange them in a vase, the colors will seem to clash. That they do not appear to clash in the flower bed is because the out-of-door light envelopes everything, soothes the violence of the colors and brings them all into an appearance of harmony. Similarly in this picture, the light streaming through the window brings all the different spots of color into a single harmony of effect. They are no longer separate and independent, but drawn together and united by the veil of lighted atmosphere. Of this

again, we will speak when we reach the subject of color.

But the rhythm of this picture, in what does it consist? Yes, in the movement, not of form, but of light. Uniting all the colors into a single harmony, it flows in and out through the lighter and darker parts of the composition; sometimes in a broad sweeping flood, as on the wall; sometimes in little pulses of movement, as it leaps from point to point; now losing itself in the hollow of a shadow, then reappearing in the gleam of a fold; all the while streaming through the picture in a continuous ebb and flow. In fact, as we study it, we gradually find that the light does for the parts of this composition what the lines of direction did in Raphael's —it unites them in a rhythmic movement.

Do not be disturbed, if at first reading these words convey little meaning to you; or if at first sight you do not feel the rhythm of the composition. It is there, however, and some day, if you are really going to be a student of pictures, you will feel it yourself.

For the present, if you will accept my word for it, I wish you to understand that this rhythmic effect of out-of-door light represented a new motive in painting. The Italians of the great period did not see it. It was the discovery of the Dutch realists, those artists of Holland in the Seventeenth Century, whose study was the real appearances of nature and life.[1] Their pictures were not as grand

[1] We shall find it was discovered also by the Spanish artist, Velasquez, in the same century.

as the Italians'; for they were small in size, and were not built up on the magnificently formal plan that gives such a dignity and distinction to the Italian pictures. Nor are their subjects so heroic and impressive. They represent only the facts of every day life. Yet they have a great beauty of their own, because they rely on the inexhaustible beauty of light.

It is on this same beauty that after two hundred years artists of our own day are relying. They have gone back to the example of Vermeer and the other Dutch artists, and are applying it to the study of similar subjects. They are painting nature as it shows itself to them in its envelope of lighted atmosphere.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE NATURALISTIC LANDSCAPE

WE come now to the other arm of the Y, about which we spoke in a previous chapter. Landscape had been used as a background to the figures, until in the Seventeenth Century some artists began to make it the chief subject of their pictures. But no sooner was landscape painting practised as a separate art than it branched into two directions. We followed one of these and saw how Claude Lorrain invented the formal, or classic landscape; taking bits of nature, some from one place, some from another, and building them up into an artificial composition, which he made more grand by the addition of classic architecture. It was not unlike the way in which a handsome house is built; the materials,—stone, wood, marble, and so on—are brought together from various places, hewed to certain shapes designed by the architect, and then put together according to the rule or formula of building. The main difference is that, though the classic landscape does not represent any actual spot in nature, it still bears a resemblance to nature. But it is nature worked over by the fancy of man, and improved according to his own idea of what is

beautiful. The artist did not paint nature because he loved it as it is, but because it furnished him with material for making a handsome picture. And this picture-making use of landscape continued to be popular with artists and the public well on into the Nineteenth Century.

Meanwhile the other branch of landscape painting had been started in the Seventeenth Century by the Dutchmen. They, as we have seen, were interested above everything in themselves, their own lives and surroundings. This was the state of mind of the whole people, and the artists gave expression to it in their pictures. They too, were picture-makers, who by their skill of painting and their love of beauty made their pictures beautiful works of art. But the subjects that they represented were seldom imaginary ones. They painted what they actually saw; and with so much truth that their art has been called an art of portraiture. They made portraits of people, portraits of the outdoor and indoor life, and portraits of their towns and harbors, and of the country that surrounded them. So, by comparison with the formal or classic landscape, we may call their landscapes naturalistic, for they represented nature as it actually appeared to their eyes.

But their art died with them. As soon as Holland had secured her independence, her artists began to travel to foreign countries, especially to Italy. There they set themselves to imitate the great Italians, and so far as landscape was concerned, joined in the popular taste for the classic kind. It was not

Crossing the Brook. *J. M. W. Turner.*

until a hundred years later, namely at the end of the Eighteenth Century, that an English artist, Constable, revived the naturalistic style of landscape. He was a miller's son, whose boyhood had been spent amid the simple loveliness of nature. Later he went to London and studied painting; but while he worked in the big city, his heart was in the country, and he suddenly made up his mind to go back to the old scenes, and paint what he knew and loved. He had seen some of the landscapes of the old Dutchmen, and resolved that he would do what they had done. In his own words, he would be a "natural painter."

It was not long before the example of Constable led some of the younger French artists to study the old Dutch pictures in the Louvre. They were dissatisfied with the methods of painting upheld by the older artists. It seemed to them a waste of time to set up a model in a studio, and then, instead of drawing it as they saw it, to correct it according to some standard of perfection. Nor did they find any interest in putting a number of such figures into artificial groups, in order to build up some grand composition, supposed to represent some classical subject or story of the old time. They were full of interest in the life of their own time, which was the period following the Revolution, when France felt young again and vigorous, and the young artists and poets and fiction-writers were eager to express in their work their joy in the reality of life. When life was so real and so full of promise, why should

they look back to the times of the great Italians and occupy themselves with the artificial and make-believe?

Among these younger men was one, Theodore Rousseau. He was not only independent in character and determined to see things with his own eyes and to represent them as he saw them and felt them, but he had a great love of nature. This led him away from the city into the country; where he studied the skies and the trees, and all the objects of the landscape with an ever increasing love and knowledge, until he came to know nature, as few have done, and to feel toward it, as a man feels toward that which he loves best in all the world. His favorite spot in nature was that which surrounds the Palace of Fontainebleau, an ancient residence some thirty miles from Paris, of the kings of France. It is a rolling tract of ground, broken up with rocky glens and thick with forest trees, especially the oak. On the outskirts of this enchanting garden of wildness, in the little village of Barbizon, Rousseau made his home, and around him gathered other artists, fascinated by the beauty of nature. Among them was the Jean François Millet whose picture, *The Sower*, we have already studied. He for the most part painted the peasants, working in the fields or tending their flocks; but the others, among them Dupré, Corot, and Diaz, painted the landscape, while Troyon introduced cows into his pictures and Jacque, sheep. With all of them the motive was to represent nature as they saw and felt

it. They are known as the Fontainebleau-Barbizon group of artists, and their example has had very great influence on modern art. I shall speak of it presently; meanwhile will continue the story of naturalistic landscape.

It is a very interesting fact that while these French artists were going straight to nature for their subjects and inspiration, some American artists, knowing nothing of the Frenchmen, were doing the same thing. A similar love of nature and longing to paint it as they saw and felt it drew them from the city to the beautiful spots that border on the Hudson River. Their leader was Thomas Cole, who made his headquarters among the hills and valleys, the waterfalls and luxuriant vegetation of the romantic Catskills. Other names are those of Thomas Doughty, Asher B. Durand, John F. Kensett. Sometimes they painted the grander aspects of the scenery; the broad Hudson sweeping past its headlands, or the lakes with their girdle of mountains; but quite as often the simpler loveliness of smiling meadows and cosy farms. But always with the sincere wish to represent, as faithfully as they could, the natural beauty that they loved.

Gradually, however, as the country expanded Westward and the pioneer spirit of the nation was aroused, American artists began to attempt bigger subjects. Church, Bierstadt, and Thomas Moran attacked the colossal wonders of the Yellowstone and the Rockies. It was no longer the beauty of nature that inspired them, so much as its marvelousness

and immensity. As many people believe, they tried to do something that is beyond the power of painting to express. For on the comparatively tiny space of their canvasses they did succeed in expressing some of the appearances of nature's grandeur, but they hardly made you feel it. I believe myself it is impossible that they should; for an artist can only make you feel in his picture something of what he himself has felt; and he must have thoroughly mastered his own feeling before he can express it. But in the presence of the stupendous works of nature, as far as my experience goes, the feeling masters ourselves. Amid the vastness of the height and depth and breadth and the grandeur and glory and marvel of it all, our spirit is swept out of us. We see the mighty volume of water coming over Niagara and hear the roar of its might; but not as we gaze into the face of a friend and listen to the voice that we have learned to know and love so well. In the one case our feeling is all brought to a center of attraction, in the other it is caught away and carried beyond our comprehension. We can only lose ourselves in wonder.

Well, artists discovered the truth of this. Constable and Rousseau lead the way, and now it is the usual habit of the landscape artists to study nature as one studies the face and form, the expression and action of a friend. One cannot know a number of friends as intimately as one or two. So they have confined their pictures to the few and simple aspects of nature; one little fragment

at a time, studied with loving intimacy and represented with the faithfulness of sincere and thorough knowledge. In doing so, they have learned like Johannes Vermeer and other Dutch artists of the Seventeenth Century, that much of the beauty and almost all the expression on the face of nature are due to the effects of natural light. Light has become the special study of the modern painters of the naturalistic landscape. And they have carried it further than the other artists did. Helped by the scientific men, who have examined into the color of light, the modern artist has found out how to represent a great variety of the effects of light: cool or warm light, the light at a particular hour of the day, at a particular season of the year, and in a particular kind of weather. In fact, the light that he represents in his pictures is a faithful rendering of some one of the countless conditions of natural light.

You remember how the light in Vermeer's picture drew all the parts of the composition into a harmonious whole and gave it rhythm. So too, in these modern naturalistic landscapes the artist has ceased to depend upon line and form in making the composition. The latter is now rather an arrangement of masses of lighted color. We will talk more about this when we come to color; for the present, it is enough to remember that we must not expect to find in modern naturalistic landscapes the same handsome patterns of composition that we find in the classical. The modern have less dignity, but

a more intimate charm. We do not stand apart from the scene and admire it; we rather enter in to it and enjoy it. It is something with which we are familiar in nature, but we are made to feel a greater beauty in it through the personal feeling that the artist has put into his work. The French have a term for this kind of landscape, which well expresses the artist's motive and the feelings which his picture inspires in us. They call it the "*paysage intime.*"[1] Literally translated this means "intimate landscape"; but it may be rendered more freely a landscape in which we recognise how intimately the artist has studied his subject.

. . . . . .

I have given you a sketch of the growth of naturalistic landscape in the Seventeenth Century up to our own day, when this branch of painting has become fully as important as that of figure subjects. Now let me briefly describe the change that has taken place in the motive of the landscape painter.

The motive, or aim of the early Dutchmen was to make their pictures resemble as much as possible the actual landscape. They were, as I have said, "portraits" of the natural surroundings. In their desire that the portraits should be lifelike these artists painted in as many of the details as they could. Moreover their point of view was objective. By "point of view" I mean the way in which they looked at the landscape; and I call it "objective," because they looked at it simply as an object in

[1] Pronounced pa-ee-sahje an-teem.

front of them to be painted as nearly as possible lifelike. This is the usual point of view of the modern photographer. You go to him to have your portrait taken. He poses you as an object in front of his camera. His aim is to make a portrait that will be like you, and will also please you because it is a good-looking picture. He will do the same for the next person that comes to him, and for the next, and so on. All of them are simply objects to be photographed. He has no personal feeling toward any of them; his point of view is objective.

But, suppose he makes a portrait of his own child. He will wish it to be more than a likeness that any one would recognise. He wants it to be a reminder in after years, when she is grown up and changed, of how she used to look as a little one, in moments when to her mother and himself she seemed more than ever a darling. To him, you see, she is not merely an object to be photographed; his point of view towards his own child is not objective; on the contrary it is influenced by his personal love for her; the picture is to be a likeness plus something more—a reflection of his own feeling. This personal kind of point of view is called "subjective," the opposite to objective. Perhaps you will understand the difference between the two more clearly by the following sentence: "The photographer photographs Mrs. X." The photographer is the subject of the verb, photographs, "Mrs. X." is the object. In this case the object is of more importance than the subject because it is Mrs. X.

who pays the money and has to be considered. But change the words in this way—"The father photographs his little one." Now, so far as the taking of the photograph is concerned, the father is the more important. He is the subject of the verb, the one who is going to do something and do it his own way, so as to represent something which he, the subject, has in his mind. His point of view is entirely his own—the subjective. Observe how this will affect the way in which he takes the photograph.

The little one has just come in, we will say, from a romp in the meadow. Her hair is tumbled and the light plays through the silky strands; there is a sparkle of sunshine in her eyes; her lips are parted in a sunny smile as she stretches out to her father a podgy hand, tightly clasping a bunch of daisies. "Little love" he thinks to himself, "what a picture!" He seizes his camera, and tells her to stand still a minute. What is it, do you think that he is going to try and catch? I need hardly say it is the radiance in her face. Perhaps her podgy hand too; but first and chiefly that expression of happiness and love; for it is an echo, as it were, of the happiness and love that he feels in his own heart toward her. If he succeed, the picture will be as much an expression of his own subjective feeling toward the child, as of the child herself.

If you see what I mean you can now begin to understand how Constable, and, even more, Rousseau and the other Fontainebleau-Barbizon artists looked at nature. No longer an objective point of

view, like the old Dutchmen's, it was a subjective one. To them nature was not merely an object of which to make a portrait. It was something they loved, and, because they loved it, they painted it, and in such a way that their pictures embodied the feeling which they had for nature. They are full of the artist's personal feeling, or as it is sometimes called, sentiment. A landscape of Rousseau's sets our imagination working. It may represent an oak tree and a rocky boulder, half hidden in ferns and vines, some little spot in the forest of Fontainebleau. As we look at it we become more and more conscious of the strength and vigor of the tree; the firmness of its huge trunk, the mighty muscles of its brawny arms, the grip which it has upon the ground, and our imagination may begin thinking of the roots hidden below the ground. While the branches spread out to the sunshine and the air, the unseen roots reach out and grip the soil and grapple with the rocks, anchoring firmly the tree against the storms of weather and time. And perhaps we begin to feel, as Rousseau himself did, that the oak is a symbol of the might of nature; and how she silently works on regardless of the changes that happen in the lot of comparatively short-lived men. Or we look at one of Corot's pictures of the twilight, in which the trees seem to have sunk asleep in blurs of shade against the pale, faint light that is fading from the sky; and the hush and tenderness of the daily miracle of nature's rest steals over our spirits. It is as if we were listening to the pensive melody

of some sweet lyrical poem, very gently and reverently read; such a one, perhaps, as Longfellow's "Hymn to the Night." On the other hand, to receive an impression like that of Rousseau's picture, we must choose a poem that tells, not of rest, but of the grandeur of human effort, and must read it in a strong voice and confidently, as if we were sure that to be strong and faithful to the end was a grand thing.

Indeed, so many landscapes, not only by the Fontainebleau-Barbizon artists, but also by modern men who are following in their footsteps, are full of the suggestion of poetry, and we speak of them as poetic landscapes. This does not mean that they illustrate any particular poem, but that they affect one's imagination in somewhat the same way as poetry does. The reason is that such artists have the spirit of poets. For nature arouses in them deep emotions, and their pictures, like the poet's verses, not only describe the beauty of nature, but express the sentiment, or feeling, of their own souls.

On the other hand, you must not expect to find this suggestion of poetry in all modern naturalistic landscape. There are still artists whose point of view, like that of the old Dutchmen, is objective. They are content to paint the beauty of nature simply as it shows itself to their eyes. Nor need we argue as to which is the better way, this, or the subjective point of view. We may prefer the one or the other; though, perhaps, it is better for us to keep our minds open to the beauties of both.

Paysage. *J. B. C. Corot.*

## CHAPTER XII

### FORM AND COLOR

WHEN we began to speak about composition we continually used the words "line and form." Gradually, however, as we left the subject of formal composition and talked of naturalistic composition, we found ourselves substituting the words "colored masses."

It would seem then as if there were a distinction between these two things; that form was on one side of the fence and color on the other. Yet that would contradict our experience; for we know that everything which has a form or shape, visible to the eye, has also color that we can see. And most things that have color are seen to have a shape or form. Not all; for example, when the sky is a cloudless blue, or when we gaze over a distant expanse of sea. Still, as a general experience, color and form are identical. The face of a friend—you recognise it by its color as well as by the form of the features; and, should you have the sorrow of looking upon that face when it is dead, the change in the color would make you recognise the once familiar features as strangely different.

Yet, notwithstanding the identity of form and

color, we find a certain separation between the two, when we come to study pictures. The reason is that some artists are more sensitive to form, others to color. As I have already said, an artist paints only the particular impression of an object which his eye receives. Every eye has its own particular way of seeing. Even the eye, most sensitive to form, will not see it as other eyes will; nor will any one color seem the same to every eye that is chiefly interested in color. This is only another way of saying that the varieties in nature are inexhaustible. Nevertheless, although no two elm trees are exactly alike, all elm trees are sufficiently similar to be recognised at once as elm trees. So with artists, some group themselves as painters of form; others, of color. In the old Italian days this distinction separated the artists of Florence from those of Venice. The Florentines—Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael, among the greatest—were masters of form; the Venetians, especially in the persons of Giorgione, Titian, Tintoretto, and Paul Veronese, were masters of color. The one group saw especially the shapes of things, the other saw the world as an arrangement of spots or masses of color.

The Florentines, in consequence of their interest in form, took great pains with the outlines of their figures. The outlines were clearly defined; in the mural paintings the figures were enclosed by an actual line; and always the figure shows distinctly against the background. For, having drawn the

figure very carefully, the artist did not let the color, that was afterwards laid on, lap over the line or interfere with the subtle undulations of the outline. They were in fact, a school of great draughtsmen, who relied principally on the beauty and vigor of the drawing. The Venetians, however, were great colorists, relying on color; and may be spoken of as painters rather than draughtsmen. Yet they too, of course, were masters of drawing. They could represent the action of the figure as well as the Florentines, but unlike the latter, did not care for the clear outline. On the contrary, they softened or blurred the outline slightly, in closer imitation of nature.

If, for example, you look carefully at a tree, you will not find that its shape is enclosed by a hard line. The light creeps round the edges of the trunk and of the masses of foliage in such a way that the outlines are softened or slightly blurred. It is the same with a figure seated in a room; here and there its edges may seem sharply cut out against the background, but in other parts the edges will seem to melt into the background. In other words, as we look at the figure, what we are most conscious of is not its outline, but its mass of color in relation to the other masses of color that surround it.

Now, this distinction, between the way in which the Florentines and the Venetians saw and represented objects, still appears in modern art. In fact, ever since the days of the great Italians there have

been artists who relied on drawing and artists who relied on color. For over a hundred years the importance of drawing has been upheld by the great school of art in Paris maintained by the French government. One of its famous teachers, Ingres, used to tell his pupils "form is everything, color is nothing." Perhaps he only meant by this that, as long as they were pupils, the only necessary thing for them to think about and learn to represent was form. Because to draw well is so important for any artist, and it is a thing that can be thoroughly taught and learned. The French school takes as its standard of excellence the perfect forms of classic sculpture and the great works of the Florentine artists. Although the student may be drawing from a living model whose form is not perfect, he is taught to correct the imperfections of this or that part, in order that the figure, as it appears in his drawing, may be as near as he can get it to classic perfection. But color, as we shall see presently, is so much a matter of each person's feeling, that it is impossible to reduce the teaching of it to any method or standard. So perhaps that is what Ingres had in mind. He meant that, for the time being, his students should consider form to be everything, color nothing.

On the other hand it is generally understood that he meant much more than this, that he was telling his pupils what he himself considered to be the whole duty of an artist. Let us try and enter into his point of view.

I can imagine some of my readers saying that the phrase, "form is everything; color, nothing," is nonsense; because color plays so important a part in our enjoyment of sight. Just think what a dreary world it would be, if everything, for instance, were a uniform gray! Quite true, and Ingres probably would have agreed. As a *man*, he no doubt enjoyed the pleasures of color. But it was as an artist that he was speaking. He was stating what he believed to be the proper subject of his own art.

In the first place he was evidently one of those artists who see the shape rather than the color of things; to whom form makes an irresistible appeal. In the second place—and mark, for this is very important—he was not thinking of how things appear in the actual world, but how they should be represented in art. He was one of those artists who are not interested in naturalistic painting; who do not profess to paint nature. On the contrary, like the great Italians, he only borrowed from nature certain materials in order to build them up into a formal composition of his own creation. He would have told you that he was not representing the works of nature but creating for himself a totally different thing—a work of art.

On the other hand, many artists will reply, that the work of art need not be a totally different thing. That they themselves, like the Dutch of the Seventeenth Century and all the modern painters of the naturalistic composition, combine the two.

It is by representing nature, that they create a work of art.

Here, you see, is a sharp conflict of points of view. One group of artists, loving nature, desires to represent it; the other, perhaps not loving nature less, certainly loves art more. This latter group, therefore, tries to improve on nature, and to use it only for the creation of something that it feels to be different and superior to nature. While the one set of men wed nature to art, the other divorce art from nature. Between the two there is a Great Divide, which no amount of talking can bridge over. The only conclusion to be reached is that there is right on both sides. For the one group, because of the kind of men composing it, its own way is the right way; and for the other, for the same reason, *its* way. We, as lookers on at the dispute, will do well to learn to see the beauty in both kinds of picture.

You may as well know the names by which the two points of view are known. With one, the *naturalistic*, we have already become acquainted. The other is called by the artists who practise it the "idealistic." They will tell you that they paint "ideal" subjects. By those, however, who disagree with them, their point of view and method are apt to be called *Academic*.

The word ideal, used in this sense, has the meaning "more perfect than in real life." When a person says: "The ideal way to spend a summer holiday" —we know even before he utters the next words,

"would be," that he is going to tell us something that he does not expect to enjoy. It is how he would have things, if he could arrange them according to his own idea of perfection. Now this is what the artist means when he calls his picture an ideal one.

Personally, I do not like this use of the word, because it seems to imply that this kind of picture is superior to the other. And the artists who paint this kind of picture believe that it is; we, however, who are simply students of pictures, longing to enjoy the beauty of all kinds of motive and ways of painting, will not admit this. We go back to the fact with which I started this book: that the value of a picture does not depend upon the subject but the way in which the artist has rendered it. Because a man portrays some noble incident from poetry or the Bible, or invents some scene out of his brain, it does not follow that his picture will represent a higher degree of beauty or a finer imagination than one which only represents some simple scene in nature. I will go further and say that some of the pictures of "still life" [1] by the Frenchman, Antoine Vollon, or our own American artist, Emil Carlsen, exhibit more beauty, yes, and even more imagination than many ambitious figure subjects. Why is this? How can a picture of a pumpkin and vegetables by Vollon, or one of Carl-

[1] Still life, or as the French call it "dead nature" includes, firstly, picked flowers, fruit and vegetables, and dead animals, and secondly, vases, pots, and other objects of man's handicraft.

sen's subjects, such as a creamy porcelain vase, and a lemon, and one or two other delicately colored objects on a white tablecloth, show more beauty and imagination than, for instance, an imposing picture like Leutze's *Washington Crossing the Delaware*?

The answer is that Vollon and Carlsen exhibit more feeling for beauty and more imagination in matters that especially belong to painting, while Leutze went outside of painting. Let me explain myself. Leutze saw beauty in the heroism of Washington and his soldiers, fighting against tremendous odds for a great cause in the terrible cold of winter. His imagination was kindled by the importance of the cause and the devotion of those who fought for it. It was the facts, as they appealed to his mind, and the ideas that his mind formed about them which he tried to represent. But the special field for the artist, as I have already said, is not covered by his mind but by his eyes. It is with what he can see that he should be first and chiefly concerned —the beauty of the visible world. And his imagination as an artist is chiefly shown in the capacity that his mind has for discovering unexpected beauties and rendering them. Thus to ourselves, and even to some artists, a pumpkin may seem but a bright orange mass, with a rough or shiny rind as the case may be; an attractive spot of color and shape, a thing to be admired for a moment and then forgotten. Another artist, on the contrary, sees a great deal more in it. He sees subtle differences of color, according to the way the light falls

on it, various delicate differences in the roughness or smoothness of the rind; curiously beautiful accidents of color, as it reflects the colors of other objects near it; mysteries of shadow, some deep and strong, others so faint that an ordinary eye might not detect them. These and other qualities, that his sensitive eyes perceive, create impressions in his brain that fill his imagination with a sense of beauty somewhat as music does. He cannot tell you why he enjoys it so much, or explain in words the effect it has on his imagination. The whole impression is a vision of his imagination, excited by the sense of sight, and this vision he sets to work to interpret on his canvas, in order that it may be communicated to our eyesight, and, in turn, excite our imagination. We receive from form and color feelings of pleasure that we cannot describe in words but which are not less real on that account. It is an abstract enjoyment, free from any distinct connection with words or facts. On the other hand, in *Washington Crossing the Delaware* it is the record of facts, presented in the picture, that chiefly interests us. Neither the forms nor the arrangement of color have in themselves any separate abstract quality of beauty.

So, it is not upon the beauty of the things seen by the eyes, but upon the interest of things understood by the mind that Leutze depended. He really neglected his own proper field of painting, for that of the writer or orator. Therefore, he put himself at a disadvantage; for I think you will

admit, that a good speaker or writer could describe the incident in a much more thrilling way than the picture does.

But we have strayed somewhat from our point. We were speaking of idealistic pictures, and noted that they are so called because the artist instead of representing nature as it is, corrects it and improves upon it in order to bring it up to what he considers an "ideal" standard of perfection. I mentioned that these pictures and the motive which prompts them are also called "Academic."

The reason is that the school in Paris which teaches these principles of painting is maintained by the Academy of the Fine Arts; and its example has been followed by many other European Academies of painting. So, when we speak of a picture being Academic in character, we mean that its motive and manner of painting follow the rules laid down by the schools. To repeat a word we have frequently used before, they are based on the Academic *Formula.* Previously it was the *Classic* formula of which we spoke. This, you remember was the rule or plan for building up a formal composition, sometimes strengthened by the introduction of classic architecture and often representing some scene or story of classic legend. And it is upon this classic formula that the Academic practice is largely based. So when a modern artist paints a picture after the fashion of Raphael's *Jurisprudence*, we can speak of its manner and motive as being Academic, Classic, or Idealistic. Sometimes, in fact, the meaning

of these words is practically the same, but not always.

For at times an Academic painter will choose an everyday subject of ordinary life, yet his picture will not be naturalistic. There are two ways in which he may miss the truth of nature. Either he will try to improve upon the actual facts, or he will leave out the light and atmosphere in which the objects appear in nature. We may find examples of both these contradictions of the natural truth in Leutze's picture. He was trained in the Academy of Düsseldorf, a city on the Rhine; at a time when that school had abandoned Classical subjects for incidents from history, or scenes from German legends, or what it called genre-pictures of peasant life. But these last were not genre in the sense that the old Dutch pictures were. For the latter reproduced the actual habits and life of the times, whereas the Düsseldorf artists presented fancy pictures in which the peasants were grouped, as if they were taking part in some scene in an opera or other theatrical performance. This artificial treatment appears in *Washington Crossing the Delaware.*

It is supposed to represent a historical incident. Do you think it has the value of history; that the incident really happened as it is here depicted? The artist, of course, was not present; he was compelled to shape the facts of the incident according to what he had read about them, or, as I rather suspect, according to what his fancy had pictured them. History tells us that the crossing began

early in the evening of December 25, 1776, and lasted until four a.m. the following morning. Does this picture represent the dimness of a winter twilight, much less the gloom of night? I might ask the further question, is any kind of natural light suggested in this picture? I feel confident the answer is "no." Leutze probably had no thought of representing this aspect of the truth; the Düsseldorf School paid no attention to the real appearances of light; or to the effect that light would have upon the appearance of the figures. Their outlines are sharply defined; every figure is rendered with about equal distinctness; no effort has been made to represent them in relation to one another, with varying degrees of clearness and obscurity. A similar artificiality appears in the representation of the ice. It is true the lights and shadows and gleam of the surfaces of real ice have been studied; so that the painting conveys the idea of ice; but this is a very different thing from the painted blocks representing the effects of real ice, as seen in real light.

So we find that Leutze, though wishing to give us a vivid representation of the incident, has neglected a number of important facts relating to the hour of the occurrence and to the conditions of atmosphere and light, as they must have affected the appearance of the scene. He was simply not interested in these matters. Then, what of the point on which he evidently relied — the grouping of the figures in the foreground? It is a ticklish job to pull a boat through a mass of floating ice-cakes.

Washington Crossing the Delaware. *Emanuel Leutze.*

(*Property of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.*)

Do you think that Washington and the flag-bearer would have increased the difficulty and peril by standing up? Don't you know that to stand up in a boat even on smooth water is a foolhardy thing to do? It is a frequent cause of accident and loss of life in pleasure parties. On an occasion so serious as this would the leader have been guilty of such folly? Certainly not. Washington and every man, not actually engaged in navigating the boat, would have been sitting low down, so as to help preserve the balance and offer as little resistance as possible to the wind. Here, then, is another indifference to facts in this so-called historic picture. But Leutze did not care about facts. His motive was to bring out the heroic character of the events. So he made Washington strike a heroic attitude. It is the way in which a popular actor takes the center of the stage and strikes an attitude and waits for the applause. Leutze wanted a central figure around which to build up his composition and, in order to support the central figure, reared another behind it holding aloft the flag. Thus he wins applause, at once, for the star actor and the patriotic sentiment of the scene. In fact his composition is similar in intention and arrangement to the grouping of figures on the stage of a popular theater. It is theatrical. I do not say dramatic, but theatrical, between which two ideas there is this distinction. When we speak of a scene being dramatic we mean that the action of the plot has been vividly expressed by means that create an illusion of truth

—that the characters behave as they might be expected to do in real life under the circumstances. By theatrical, on the other hand, we imply that the behaviour of the actors, instead of "holding the mirror up to nature," is regulated so as to produce an artificial effectiveness. Such a scene we call theatrical, or stagey. And the same words, in my opinion, can be applied to this picture. For Leutze failed to realise, not only that truth may be stronger than fiction, but also that it may be more impressive than artificial effectiveness. The true word spoken in simple earnestness, the true act done simply, often move men's imagination, where loud rhetoric and ostentatious conduct leave it cold. So, too, in a picture, a deeper sentiment may be aroused by simple truth of representation, than by a display of mock heroics.

In this picture, you will observe, we have been discussing the Academic point of view applied to the representation of an incident that really happened. The painter undertook a real subject, but has not rendered it as it would have really appeared to us, had we been there to see the event. This is a charge that can be brought against many so-called historical pictures, and against those smaller ones, the genre pictures, which are supposed to represent incidents of actual everyday life. When painted in the Academic manner they are not true to life, but artificially concocted.

On the other hand, as I have said, many Academic pictures, choosing classical or idealistic sub-

jects, make no pretence of representing life. They try to improve on life by making their forms more beautiful than they actually are in nature; and build up compositions which must not be compared with the way in which people group themselves in real life. In such pictures we do not look for natural beauty but for that of the artist's own invention.

So, to bring the subject to a finish, we must bear in mind that there are two distinct ways of painting a picture. If the artist has tried to represent nature, we must learn to compare it with nature; if on the contrary, he has tried to paint a subject of "ideal perfection," we must not find fault with its unnaturalness. We may prefer the one or the other kind; but should not let our preference interfere with our judgment of the different merits of each. Until we recognise the "Great Divide" between the Academic and the Naturalistic points of view, we shall not get very far in our appreciation of pictures.

## CHAPTER XIII

### COLOR

IT was mentioned in the previous chapter that artists may be divided into two classes: those who are particularly interested in the shape or form of what they see, and those who see the world as an arrangement of "colored masses." It is the latter way of seeing things that we are now going to consider.

We know that everything visible to the eye has color. When we think of a garden lawn, an impression of green comes into our mind. Green, an artist would say, is the local color of the lawn—the general hue which distinguishes it from the paths and flower beds. There may be dandelions spotted about the grass; indeed it is a lucky lawn that is not overrun with them; yet, notwithstanding the yellow patches, the local color of the lawn is green. And this is true, although here and there the grass may appear yellow in the warm sunshine, or, where the shadows of the trees lie, may have a bluish tinge; or again, in the distance may appear to be almost gray. You see then, that when we begin to talk about color, we do not think only of the general hue or local color, but also of the

changes which take place in its appearance, according as it is subject to light and shadow or is seen near or further off.

Now let us take another case. A woman, we will suppose, has a quantity of white cotton material which she proposes to dye blue. She buys some indigo, and puts it in a tub of water. Into this dye-bath she plunges the cotton, and then hangs it on a line to dry. When she has taken it down and ironed it, it presents a uniform hue of blue, its local color. But what happens when she has made it up into a dress? The local color remains the same; but the appearance is no longer of a uniform hue. In some parts the blue is paler or whiter than the local color, in other parts darker; for now the material is not spread out smoothly, the light no longer falls upon every part of it in the same way. The skirt, for example, hangs in folds; and the full light strikes directly only on the raised edges of the pleats. Into the hollow of the fold less light penetrates, and at different angles.

Just what do we mean by angle of light? We must remember that the rays of light coming from the sun, radiate or travel outward in straight lines, as the spokes of a wheel radiate from the hub; except that the spokes of light are not confined to a flat circle, but radiate in all directions from every part of the sun's orb. But to return to the wheel. Let us suppose that it is a buggy's wheel, and that the buggy is jacked up, so that we can turn the wheel easily. We will do so until one of the spokes

is pointing straight down to the ground, and, to make sure that it is exactly vertical, we will suspend in front of it a string with a weight attached to its lower end. If the spoke follows exactly the direction of this plumb line, then we know that it is pointing down directly to the surface of the ground. We know, in fact, that the direction of the spoke is at right angles to the surface of the ground; or, which amounts to the same thing, we may say that the surface of the ground is at right angles to the direction of the spoke.

But what about the direction of the other spokes of the wheel? With them the plumb line will not help us. We must get a straight stick, say the handle of the stable broom. If we hold this along the direction of either of the spokes, nearest to the center one, we shall find that when the handle touches the ground, it will be at a point further off from the hub, and not at a right angle to the ground but at an acute angle. If we try the same experiment with the next spoke, we may need a longer stick, for the point where it reaches the ground will be still further from the hub, and the angle of direction will be still more acute. If we follow on to the next spoke, we shall probably find that its direction, when extended, does not reach the ground. It points above it. Perhaps it hits the barn wall; and then again comes the question: does it hit the wall at a right angle or at an acute angle? The answer to this, if you think a moment, will depend upon the position, not only of the spoke,

but also of the wall. For example, the spoke may point directly at the wall, so that when you stand at the corner of the barn and run your eye along the wall, the spoke will make a right angle with the wall's vertical direction. But the wall has another direction—a horizontal one; and this may slope away from the direction of the spoke, so that if you stand in front of the wall, your stick makes with it an acute angle. Evidently under some circumstances a single direction may make with the surface of the wall both an acute and a right angle.

By this time our experiment, which started out so simply, has become perhaps a little puzzling to follow. But I don't mind if it has; for I wish you to realise that, although this matter of direction and angles is simple in principle, it works out in a very complicated way. The more we realise this, the more we shall realise the wonderful effects of light upon color. As a beginning, let us imagine that the hub of the wheel is a center of heat, white-hot, and that the spokes are rays of light, not stationary like the woodwork but travelling outward at great speed. The shaft of light that runs straight down and strike the ground at right angles to the surface, would make the spot where it touches very bright. The second shaft, however as it reaches the ground further off from the hub will illumine the spot with less light. Moreover, since it hits an acute angle and is travelling fast, some of it will glance off the spot. It will be reflected from the surface back and forth, somewhat as a ball is tossed

backwards and forwards from the hands of a group of children.

This fact of reflection and the fact that the so-called angle of reflection is the same as the angle of incidence, or, in other words, the angle at which the light falls upon the object, explains a familiar sight. Have you never seen, late in the afternoon, when the sun is above the horizon, a blaze upon a hill side, so bright that your first thought is it must be a house on fire? You saw it suddenly; and, if you walk a few steps to the right or left, it as suddenly disappears; to reappear, however, when you resume your former position. By this time you know it is not a fire, but the reflection of the sun from some window or tin roof. The light, striking down upon it, glances off, and, as you happen to be in the line of its angle of reflection, strikes you full in the eyes. But move your position, so as to get out of the "line of fire," and the reflected ray passes you by without attracting your notice.

Here is another example of reflected light, which you yourself can control. Do you remember the fairy *Tinker Bell,* in "Peter Pan"; how she appeared as a patch of light, dancing over the walls? Very likely when you returned from the theater you made her appear on the walls of your home. As you sat at the breakfast table you picked up a tumbler of water, or a bright bladed knife, and moved it about until it caught the light and tossed it across the room on to the wall, where you could make the fairy hover by gently shaking the glass

or knife. On the other hand by changing the position of the glass or knife you could cause her to disappear; to reappear if you wished it, on another part of the wall.

Now after considering the difference between direct and reflected light, let us go back to the blue dress. We were saying, you will remember, that the skirt no longer presented an appearance of uniform hue. For the local color of the material had become affected by the way in which the light reached the folds. On the raised edges the blue appears almost white; in the bottom of the hollows, where no light penetrates, it appears to be almost black. Meanwhile on the sloping edges of the folds there are varying degrees of lighter or darker blue, according as the material approaches nearer to the light or recedes further from it. In other words, the light strikes the surfaces of the dress at different angles; there are varieties of reflections, and some parts of the skirt are almost entirely removed from the action of the light.

But all this time we have been speaking of light, and yet the subject of this chapter is color. Well, the reason is, that color is light and light is color. If we were shut up in a cellar from which all light was excluded, we should see no color. Our eyes would experience no sensations of sight whatever, and, if we were left there a long time, our eyes, not being used, would probably lose their sense of sight. But, if after we had been in a cellar a little while surrounded by "thick darkness" as the old Eng-

lish expression is—meaning a darkness so opaque that the eye cannot penetrate it—the window shutter should be opened a trifle, then immediately our eyes would experience a sensation of color. The shaft of light, cutting across the darkness, would look white; but, if it hit upon a shelf of apples, our eye would receive a sensation of green or red or yellow. If light is color, why should it seem white in one case and some other hue in another? It is because in the whiteness of light are contained all the colors of which we are conscious. Very likely you know the experiment by which the truth of this is shown. Supposing you are still in the cellar and place in the pathway of the shaft of light a prism—that is to say, a bar of glass not round or square, but triangular—what will happen? The glass being transparent, the light will pass through it. But not in a straight line; for, as it hits one of the sloping surfaces of the prism, it will be bent out of its course; and then, as it reaches the opposite sloping side, it will again be bent into another direction. So the light in its passage through the prism will have been twice bent out of its original direction; and, when it emerges, it will be no longer a single shaft of white light, but will appear as a broad band of many colored lights; red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet. We may call this succession, a scale of color lights. They correspond in hue and order to the bands or scale of colored lights in the rainbow, for the latter is the result of an act of nature, which on a very large scale is like

our experiment with the prism. Only nature's prism is formed by a bar of rain on which strikes a shaft of light through a slit in the thick upper clouds.

With this scale of colored lights scientists have made delicate experiments. They have analysed the colors more exactly; discovering, that is to say, the distinct degrees of color, for instance, between the red and the orange, as the one passes into the other; and again between the orange and the yellow, the yellow and the green, and so on. Then, after discovering the succession of monochromatic tints, as they call them, by optical instruments, they have tested the power of the human eye to discriminate, or detect the difference between these various tints. Notwithstanding that the difference between the latter is so slight, they have found that the eye is sensitive to something like two million monochromatic tints. I mention it not to trouble you with figures but to stir your imagination; for such a fact should fill us with admiration not only of the marvellous qualities of light but also of the marvellous capacity of the human eye. It helps us to begin to realise the miracle of light and the immense field of study that lies open to the artist who is a colorist, to whom, that is to say, it is the color of the visible world that most appeals.

Light, then, contains within itself all colors. When light falls upon an object, for example, a leaf, the latter absorbs some of the colors of the light and throws off others. The part thrown off in the case

of the leaf is what we call its color: green, or it may be greenish yellow, or a bluish green, or in autumn, crimson. Every substance has this power of absorbing some of the light and of throwing off the rest; and it is the different chemical properties of different substances that decide which of the colors of light they will absorb and which they will throw off; or, as we say, causes them to be a certain color.

We have spoken of the human eye being sensitive to an immense variety of colors. Let us consider the meaning of sensitive. In the first place, the eye receives an impression that causes it to telegraph to the brain a record of the hue; but it means more, for the word sensitive implies a capacity to feel. In some way or other the brain receives an impression of feeling. Just how it does, I understand, is not known; but scientists tell us that these impressions of sight, while they are not quite similar to the feelings aroused by sound, have something in common. Just as some sounds give pleasure while others are disturbing, so with colors—we receive from them sensations of pain or pleasure. According to the degree of our sensitiveness to sound or color our feelings are aroused. It may be only slightly, or it may be more intensely. It is pleasant, for example, to hear the sound of the robin's note, and, as we peep out of our bedroom window to look at him, we may catch sight of the yellow or red notes of color that the tulips are beginning to make against the dark earth. They too will give us pleasure. And in both

cases our pleasure may go no further than just a little enjoyment of their note of color or sound. Or, on the other hand, they may stir our imagination. We recognise their notes as the first signs of spring. Nature in her mysterious way has whispered alike to the robin and the tulip that the rigor of winter is over; that spring is come with its birth of new life, bringing beauty and happiness in its train. And in ourselves, as we recognise the notes of spring, life leaps up with a new sense of the beauty and happiness of living. Those notes, in fact, which began by giving only simple pleasure to our ear, have stirred ideas in our minds; they have become associated in our imagination with a fuller and higher sense of life.

On the other hand, some notes of sound distress us. The unexpected discharge of a gun may strike us unpleasantly; the roar of the wind and the rain against the window fill us with melancholy; the cry of a creature in pain, even before we know whence the cry comes or the reason of it, may cut us like a knife. I mean, that sounds, quite apart from any definite thoughts that we associate with them, may hurt us. So may colors. I might illustrate this by saying that sometimes when we enter a room the color of the carpet, perhaps green with red roses as big as cabbages, and the color of the furniture, which may be of gold upholstered in blue, seem to start up and hit us a bang in the eye. But perhaps you like smart colors, so I will offer another example. Shakespeare said—

She never told her love,
But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,
Feed on her damask cheek. She pined in thought;
And with a green and yellow melancholy,
She sat, like patience on a monument,
Smiling at grief.

Shakespeare's opportunity of seeing pictures had been very limited. In fact, I am sure that he was not thinking of pictures when he described melancholy as "green and yellow." Either he had an instinctive dislike of this combination that probably he could not have explained; simply he felt it to be disagreeable; or he may have associated it in his imagination with something he had observed. Perhaps for instance, since he speaks in the next line of a "monument," he may have been thinking of the green and yellow stains on old tombstones, so that "green and yellow" suggested to him the very opposite of "damask cheek" with its rosiness of healthy life; in fact the signs of wasting and decay. Anyhow, to Shakespeare's imagination these colors represented something disagreeable. That is the point. Colors, like sounds, may excite feelings of distress or pleasure.

And, if single notes may give pleasure, how much more a number of them. It is when a number of them are combined into a composition that a harmony is produced. The musician creates a harmony of sound, the painter a harmony of color. The secret of a harmony is the relation that the separate notes of sound or color in it bear to one another.

If I try to explain this, it is not because I wish to tell you how to make a color harmony, but because I hope the explanation may help you to enjoy it. Perhaps we may get an idea of what relation means if we think of a football team. It consists of a number of individuals with separate duties. Some play forward, others half-back, quarter-back, and so on. When each member not only does his own work as well as possible but plays well into the hands of the other members, we speak of the excellence of the team work. And in nine cases out of ten it is not brilliant individual play, but fine all-round team-work that wins the game. The different members are so well related to one another, that the whole team works harmoniously.

It is similar in a harmony of colors. For perhaps you see that what I wish you to understand is not that a few bright colors make a harmony, but that it is the result of a combination. There must be team-work among the colors. They count as individual spots of color, but still more in relation to all the other colors. There may be one or more crack players—I mean predominant [1] notes of color, —but they will have colleagues or assistants—colors of the same hue but differing in degree—which will repeat or echo their effect, with variations all over the canvas. These subordinate colors and the crack ones will play in and out, backing one another up, and, as it were, passing the ball backward and forward into one another's hands; acting in such exact

[1] Showing a mastery over others.

relation to one another, that their efforts result in a perfect harmony of effect.

But so far we have been thinking only of one team, working out its scheme of attack and defense in practice play. There is a more complicated play, namely, when the team is pitted against a rival team. So in color. An artist will introduce rivalry, or competition into his color scheme; namely, two crack notes of color that, seen by themselves, would produce a disagreeable sensation. Why does he do so? Because he knows the value of contrast and discord; just as you know it is more fun to watch a game of football between two well-matched rival teams than the merely practice play of one of them. For now the artist is pitting one set of colors against another set; the crack players on both sides and their backers-up—the colors of different but closely related hue; and the game between them is fast and furious—an interplay of likes and unlikes, of repetitions and of contrasts. The excitement of the game results from the even balance of the two rival sets of colors, swaying backward and forward over the gridiron—I mean the canvas—massing here and there, then scattering in a burst of animation—the two teams so evenly matched that their rivalry only makes the give and take of the game more brilliantly harmonious.

Such, in a way, is the harmony of color, as it appears in the pictures of a true colorist. It has a focal point of intensity where the effect is massed, but all about it, scattered over the canvas, is the in-

terplay of related similarities and contrasts, all of which combine into a harmonious whole.

It may help you, as it has helped me, to understand the combination of these numberless repetitions and contrasts of color, if I tell you of an experience of sound that I remember. I was one of a party walking in the Swiss mountains, and at a turn in the path we came upon a man, sitting with a gun across his knees. For a small amount this mountaineer was prepared to let off his gun. We paid, he fired. There was a sharp report—a focal point of sound—then a neighboring mountain side sent back an echo, which was caught by another that sent it back, whence again it was re-echoed from another mountain peak, and so on, back and forth, until in a moment or two, the whole mountain world resounded with a wondrous roar. From a single note of sound, which made a very slight impression had grown a multiplication of slightly differing sounds. For the first echo was slightly different to the original note, and then again the echo of this echo differed slightly, so too the echo that came next and the one that followed that, and so on through a scale of slightly varying tones, that finally merged into one huge swell of throbbing sound, as of some mighty organ music—a harmony of tumult. It was a wonderful sensation, and has helped me to realise the wonder of color harmony. For an artist generally founds his color scheme upon one or two notes of color, and then by representing the echoes of these colors, as they are re-

flected at different angles from the various planes of surface, gradually elaborates or works out a maze of related colors that merge into a harmony.

On the other hand it is not only by painting the interplay of reflections that an artist produces a harmony of color. There is a less complicated way, represented in Japanese prints and paintings, and in the work done by some of our artists who have adopted their method. In this case the color is flat; the objects, that is to say, are not modeled by lights and darks. The form, instead of being actually represented is only suggested. Consequently there are no reflections and the colors are laid on flatly and smoothly. But they are most carefully related to one another; both in quantity and tint. The artist, for example, may use only rose and lavender and black. But his sense of color is first shown in his choice of the particular tints of rose and lavender and black, and then secondly, in his distribution of these on the white paper. Perhaps he determines to make the black his crack player. But he wishes to produce a balance of harmony of all his colors, so he carefully considers how large a space the chief spot of black shall occupy, and then what quantity of the remaining spaces shall be occupied by the rose and lavender and the white paper. Having thus worked out the ground plan of the scheme, he may elaborate it by repeating some of the black in other parts of the picture, and by introducing echoes of the rose and lavender in the large spot of black. The echoes, in this case, you observe, are not reflections, they are

simply repetitions in smaller quantities of the colors of the main spots. His composition, in fact, is a pattern of main spots, and their echoes; the whole presenting a unity and harmony because the colors are in exact relation.

And when this has been done either in a simple harmony or a more elaborate one, with the true feeling of a colorist, no alteration can be made in any part of the picture without producing a discord, destroying, that is to say, the exquisite balance of the whole. I mean, that if, for instance, you were to cut off a part of the picture in order to make it fill a frame, you would destroy the harmony of the whole. For now the relation of the colors will have been disturbed. There is no longer the same balance in the quantity of each, nor do they occupy the same related position in the composition.

In a word, as we said above, the secret of color harmony is the relation of the separate colors to one another and the whole.

## CHAPTER XIV

### COLOR (*Continued*)—VALUES—SUBTLETY

SO far in our talk on color we have laid stress on three points: first, that color is light; secondly, that color is affected by light; thirdly, that the painter who is a colorist arranges color in relation to other colors, so as to produce a harmony.

The reason was, that I wished you not to think of color as paint. Paints, or as artists call them, pigments, are only the materials that man has invented to imitate the real thing. The real thing is nature's color. Pigments we will speak of later.

From early ages man has been attracted by nature's colors and has tried to imitate them in order to brighten up his own person and his surroundings. He began by smearing his own body with some form of dye or pigment, either to make himself more attractive or to strike terror into his enemies. As he became more civilised and learned to weave wool and cotton and flax, he dyed his blankets and clothing, and added gay borders and patterns to the local color. Growing more skilful in the fashioning of clay pots, and bows and arrows, and other articles of war and domestic use, he decorated them with colored designs. Little by little he learned how to imi-

tate the beauty of nature's coloring. But, at first, it seems to have been the brightness of color that attracted him; just as to-day, a great many children and, for that matter, grown-ups as well, prefer gay colors. Manufacturers and merchants know this. Accordingly, to suit the taste of a great many customers who still have the primitive child-man's love of gay-colored things, they fill the markets with gaudy-colored carpets and wall-papers, and gaudily upholstered furniture, gaudy curtains, cushions and so forth. And people buy them, so that thousands of households are furnished in a way that to any one who love's nature's coloring, seems horrible. Yes, this is a strong word. But if you will believe me, not too strong to express the feelings of distress that such parlors excite in people whose taste is more civilised. They are as much distressed, as if the parlor were filled with roosters, parrots and monkeys, all crowing, and screeching and chattering together in a horrible discord of sound.

Perhaps you do not like my hinting that people who prefer these noisy colors are not yet fully civilised. You have been taught that we are living in a very civilised age, with all sorts of modern improvements that the people of the past never thought of, much less enjoyed. This of course is perfectly true. Science and mechanical inventions have made living easier; travel is cheaper, education has advanced, books are within the reach of everybody and, best of all, we have more pity for the poor, and the sick and the afflicted, and try to make their

lot less terrible. Yes, and in thousands of other ways we are more civilised. Yet, even so, we may be far from enjoying all the opportunities of civilisation that this wonderful age offers.

How many girls and boys, I wonder, who have enjoyed the benefits of a good education, when they reach the age in which they can choose for themselves what they will read, select the best books? I mean by the best books, those that in history, poetry, biography, travel, science, and fiction, really give us the best kind of knowledge of men and life. Are there not thousands of readers who are satisfied to read nothing else but the latest novel, no matter how trashy it may be? Thousands, indeed, who are not bettering their minds and lives, as really civilised people should try to do; but allowing the garden of their hearts and souls to become laid waste and barren, just as your flower garden would soon be, if you turned loose in it the poultry and the pigs.

The truth with such readers is, that, though they enjoy the blessings of civilisation, they have missed one of civilisation's finest products. They have not *good taste,* their *taste* is *bad.* And bad taste is like a poison. If it is allowed to remain in the system it will in time affect the whole body. None of us can make a habit of reading trash without sooner or later becoming trashy and cheap and commonplace in our thoughts, conversation, choice of friends and conduct.

However, as you are reading this book, I hope it

is a sign that you do not care for trashy reading. So let us get back to the subject of taste in matters of color. If one looks back over the past, there is no doubt that as people became more civilised, one of the ways in which they showed improvement was in color taste. They gradually ceased to be attracted only by the brightness of color; they began to find beauty in the relation of one color to another; to try to produce a harmony of colors.

I wonder whether, as you have been reading, it has occurred to you to think: Why does the author object to bright colors? He says we learn to love color by studying nature's coloring. Are there not bright colors in nature? Is it wrong to like them?

Certainly not; nor do I object to bright colors. I am often delighted with them. But, in the first place, bright colors do not look the same in nature as they do in a parlor. Secondly, art, as we have said before, is different to nature. The artist does not imitate everything he sees in nature, but from it selects this and that to make his work of art.

Nothing in our garden makes a brighter spot than the giant poppy. Its wide and flaring crimson cup, stained with the purple of its stamens, burns like a flame. I love the brave show poppies make, ranged at intervals along the borders or massed in a clump with a setting of greenery around them. For, to prevent their brilliance overpowering the garden, they need plenty of space and abundance of contrasting colors. I cannot imagine anything more noisy and gaudy than a little yard entirely filled

with them. The reason they need space is that they may be surrounded with plenty of atmosphere. It is this which makes so great a difference between effects of color out of doors and indoors. Out of doors the atmosphere acts like a veil, softening the sharpness of colors and forms and helping to draw them together into a unity of effect. It is indeed, more like a succession of veils, for between us and nearby objects is a certain amount of atmosphere; while objects further off, and still further off, and further off still, are separated from us by continually increasing quantities of atmosphere. And these planes of atmosphere, as we called them in Chapter IV, act like veils of gauze through which everything is seen. As I have said, they help to subdue the colors and draw them into relation with one another, and so suggest an effect of harmony. In a room, however, especially a small one, we cannot get far enough away from objects to permit much atmosphere to come in between. There is not so much distance to lend enchantment to the view. Consequently, though we may enjoy the beauty of a few of those poppies in a bowl on our table, we should find a carpet or curtains or sofa of the same color much too gaudy and overpowering. The effect would be much as if, while the piano was being played, someone should blow loudly on a tin horn. The noise would disturb the harmony of the music; we should shut our ears or turn the tin horn disturber out of the room. So when we enter a gaudily furnished room, we should like to shut our eyes to

the discord of color, and, if we had our way, would banish the disturbing objects to the junk-shop.

But now for the second reason why some of nature's colors, beautiful in themselves, may be less so when introduced into a room or picture. For the furnishing of a room, like the composing of a picture, should, as far as possible, be a work of art, and the artist, as you recollect, does not imitate nature. He selects from nature. Out of her unlimited storehouse of form and color he chooses for his purpose some few effects at a time and combines them in his work of art; guided in his choice and arrangement by the principles of beauty he has discovered in nature, particularly by the principle of harmony. And in this respect he has an advantage over nature. For the light and atmosphere cannot choose the colors and objects which they help to harmonise. Even after they have done their best, there may be so many of those poppies that, while their colors are subdued and brought into some relation with the other colors, the relationship is still too distant—the difference between the two colors too wide—to produce a perfect harmony. But the artist, since he can pick and choose what he will put into his picture, is able to avoid this difficulty; just as a young couple when they start housekeeping can generally avoid having things that will disturb the harmonious arrangement of their parlor. I say "generally," for sometimes, notwithstanding their own taste, they receive from some kind but tasteless friend, the present of a piece of furniture

that plays the tin-horn to all their ideas of harmony. This is a hard case. They do not wish to offend Mrs. So-and-so or Aunt Jane, and yet they do not like having to live with something offensive to their own feelings!

We have said so much about the artist working for a harmony of colors, that I ought to warn you that you will not see color harmonies in all pictures. For a great many painters are not colorists. Bouguereau, for example, was interested chiefly in form. If he represented a young girl, drawing water from a well, he painted her flesh pink; her dress, perhaps, blue; the stone-work of the wall, gray; the wood work of the bucket, brown; and, if there was a bush in the picture, of course, painted it green. His only purpose in choosing this color or that color was to represent the general appearances of the figure and other objects. He only *saw* color, never *felt* it. He never even saw it, as it really is; or he would hardly have painted all his girls and women the same kind of pinky or creamy china-color. In fact, color to him was quite unimportant. If he could *draw* the girl beautifully he was satisfied. So it is beautiful form we must look for in his pictures; the color does not count.

Then there is another kind of painter; Vibert, for example, whose pictures were popular in this country. He liked to paint a cardinal in a scarlet cassock, either in or out of doors. The scarlet makes a big bright spot in the pictures. Vibert was evidently fond of color; but in a very crude or unre-

fined sort of way. He had the primitive man's or child's fondness for gay or brilliant hues; and since there are many people with the same child-like instinct, he sold his pictures easily. He too, for the most part only *saw* color. Or, if he felt it at all, only in the very simple way of liking one color better than another. Color never stirred in him deep feelings. He never felt it as a musician feels sound. He never wove the related colors into a harmony. He was a gay painter, but not a colorist.

I wonder whether you are beginning to understand the difference? What I have said may help to point the way to an understanding, but no amount of reading can make you feel the beauty of color, or enter into the feelings of an artist who is a colorist; and enjoy his work. This you can only do for yourself by using your own eyes. Nor do I mean by this that you should now and then look at a picture, or once in a while open your eyes to the beauty of nature. What I suggest is that you should get into the habit of keeping your eyes open to the beauty of the world. If you do, you will have your reward. And the more you watch out for beauty, and so train your feeling and taste, the more you will discover beauty in unexpected directions. Especially you will find that some of the most beautiful color harmonies are made up of colors, that a little while ago you would not have felt to be beautiful.

It is not difficult, for example, to enjoy the beauty of nature's coloring when the sun is shining brightly. But, because it is so easy, some painters who are

colorists will not care to represent it in their pictures. They will wait for what they call a gray day—when the sun is hidden behind clouds of mist. Or, like Corot, they will prefer the early morning or late evening, when the sky is very pale, and the colors of nature are very subdued. Or, like Whistler, who painted *The White Girl,* a girl in white, standing on a white rug in front of a white wall, they will choose some subject in which the difference between the colors is very slight. In a word they are looking, not for splendid but for subtle harmonies. Those grand Venetian colorists of the Sixteenth Century, Titian, Tintoretto, and Paul Veronese, and the great Flemish colorist of the Seventeenth Century, Peter Paul Rubens, for the most part gloried in harmonies of splendour, Velasquez, however, Rubens's contemporary, whose life was spent in the service of Philip IV of Spain, proved himself to be one of the world's greatest colorists by the soberness and subtlety of his harmonies. A large part of his work consisted in painting the portraits of the King, the Royal Family, and the chief State officers. The taste of the Court was opposed to bright colored costumes; indeed the prevailing colors were black and gray, with occasional touches of relief, such as blue or pale rose. Yet out of these few colors he made wonderful harmonies. To his sensitive eye a black cloak was not a mass of thick darkness. As the light shone upon the various surfaces at different angles, he discovered all sorts of nuances, as the French say, or

Prince Balthazar Carlos. *Velasquez.*

shades and degrees of lighter and darker black, in fact, a scale of tints out of which he composed a harmony. It was the same way with the grays and drabs. We often call these neutral colors, by which we mean that there is no particular color in them. But Velasquez did not look at grays and drabs in this way. Having to paint them he searched them for possibilities of beauty, and found them in the nuances, occasioned by the action of light. And out of the scale of these nuances he composed harmonies.

To these nuances artists have given a name—values. We know the ordinary use of the word. It represents the relation of something to a certain fixed standard. Thus, we take a dollar as a standard; and say the value of this knife is fifty cents, or of that two dollars. These knives differ in value; or, on the other hand, we may have two or more knives that correspond in value. Or, again, if some of you are arranging a picnic as a Dutch treat, one of the party may undertake to bring ten cents' worth of eggs, another ten cents' worth of crackers, and so on. Though every one of twenty boys and girls brings something different, the value of each contribution is the same.

Now applying this to colors, you may see that the point to which I am leading you is this. Just as the knife varies in value from other knives, so may one tint of black vary from another tint of black; one tint of red from another tint of red; one tint of yellow from another tint of yellow. Equally, since a certain quantity of crackers may have the

same value as a certain quantity of cheese, so may a certain tint of red have the same value as a certain tint of yellow. But what is the standard by which one kind of color can be compared with another?

The standard of value adopted by a painter, is light. The value of any color depends upon the amount of light reflected from it. Thus, if you look at a man dressed in black, you will notice that the black upon the shoulder, or the chest, or whatever part receives the greatest quantity of light, will seem less black than those parts which receive less light. And it may be only in the hollows or shaded parts that the black looks really black. Well, each one of these separate degrees of black represents to the painter a separate value of black.

Perhaps you will say—Why this is only a repetition of what was said about the painting of reflections of light and the shadows on the blue skirt! You are right. Then—why, you ask, this new term —values? Well, it was when the modern man discovered that the painting of these reflections and shadows could be made a means of producing harmonies of color; that, indeed, harmonies could be produced out of the reflections alone, that they invented this new name. They had discovered a new principle of harmony, depending upon the varieties of light on color, and they gave to these varieties the new name of values. Not that the principle was really a new one. It was an old one discovered by Velasquez and at the same time by the Dutch—Ver-

meer among them.[1] But about 1860 some modern artists from studying the works of these men made a new discovery of the principle.

Before discussing the importance of the rediscovery, let us turn back to the other use of that word values. If you remember, the word is used not only of the differences in degree in tint of some one color; for example, the different values of black, of green, of red and so on, but it is also used as a standard to compare a color of one hue with a color of another hue. Let me remind you of that Dutch treat picnic to which everybody brought a contribution of equal value. I need not tell you that the ten cents' worth of soda crackers will make a bigger parcel than the ten cents' worth of cheese, while ten cents' worth of ——'s "fine chocolate" would make a very small parcel indeed. Now, colors differ in the same way. All colors throw off a certain quantity of light, but the amount varies.

You remember, we said that the cause of color was the fact, that light which is made up of all colors penetrates every object in nature; that each object absorbs a certain quantity of the color and throws off the remainder. And that this remainder is what appears to our eyes as the color of the object. But while we think of this remainder as color, do not let us forget that it is light. And, recollecting that color is light, we can understand that one color has more or less light in it than another.

[1] Turn back to his picture and see how all this that we are now discussing is there illustrated.

I wish to make sure that you do understand this, so let us try to illustrate it. We are in the habit of estimating things by percentage. Suppose then that we think of the light of the sun as representing one hundred points. Scientists have discovered that objects which we call yellow absorb only some twenty of these points; that, in fact, the quantity of light thrown off by what we call yellow, or in other words its value, is some eighty per cent. What we call red, however, represents some sixty per cent. of light; green, about forty per cent.

Now supposing an artist wishes to combine these colors in a Dutch picnic; if he wishes, that is to say, to combine these colors, so that they will contribute equally to the whole composition of color. He will use a great deal less yellow than red, and less of either of these colors than green. The packet of green, like the crackers, will be bigger than the cheese, or red; the yellow, or chocolate, smallest of all.

Let us imagine a picture that will illustrate this. But before we do so I must remind you that what we are talking about is color harmonies, and particularly those harmonies of color in which the modern artist delights. He learned them, as I have said, from Velasquez, who was debarred from using brilliant colors, he learned them also from the old pictures of the Dutchmen, like Vermeer; lastly he learned them from studying the pictures and prints of the Japanese. The effect of all these examples was to make him prefer subtlety to splendour.

I have already explained the meaning of subtlety and subtle. Both are derived from a Latin word which means "finely woven"—fine spun threads of silk or linen, woven closely together into a strong but very delicate and thin fabric. So when we speak of a subtle distinction we have in mind a distinction that is very slight; as between two tints of yellow. To many eyes they will seem the same; whereas an eye more subtly sensitive to degrees of color can distinguish the difference. We may say of such an eye, that it has a very delicate sense of sight, or subtlety of vision. Subtlety implies delicacy; and when we speak of the subtlety of an artist's color harmonies—how subtle they are—we have in mind a delicate, exquisite, refined use of color. He has not used many colors; nor obtained his effects by force of strong contrasts. On the contrary, it is by subtle relation of a few colors, by the subtle differences in their values that a harmony, distinguished by its exquisite delicacy, is produced.

Our own American artist, the late James McNeill Whistler, was one of the first of the modern artists to paint this sort of harmony. He painted four pictures of a girl in a white dress, which he afterwards entitled "Symphonies in White," numbering them one, two, three, and four, just as a musician's works are distinguished by a number. For Whistler felt that there is some similarity between the harmonies of color and those of sound notes, and tried in his pictures to produce subtle effects as musicians

do. In one of this series he represents the girl in a white dress, standing on a white rug, before a white wall. The only variation from the white is afforded by her dark hair and the flesh coloring of her face and hands. These are what we may call "accents"—notes of color that stand out with prominence and decision. The rest is a symphony in white.

He might have made his problem easier by throwing a strong light upon the figure from one side. This would have made some parts of the dress shine out with the brightness of very high lights, and would have caused the figure to cast a shadow on the wall. This would have produced a harmony of contrasts; a bold contrast of color values, easier to paint. But Whistler was intent on something very subtle—a harmony of similarities. So he placed the figure in a dull light, that was evenly distributed over the rug, the figure, and the wall, with the result that the distinctions between the color values were very slight, very subtle. This means that it was difficult to make the different masses of white distinct from one another. The artist, you see, had to make it appear that the girl's white figure was nearer to us than the white wall; to make us feel that, while the wall is flat, the figure has roundness and bulk; and that, while the wall is an upright surface, the rug represents a horizontal one. Yes it was indeed a very difficult problem, because the only possible way of solving it was to render the very slight differences in the quantity of light, reflected

from each and every part of the white surfaces, according to the angle at which the light reached any part, and the distance each part was from the eye of the artist. And no doubt the keen mind of Whistler was interested in the subtlety of the problem. But this was not all. His feeling as an artist was equally subtle. It delighted in the subtleties of color values.

However, he also enjoyed effects of brighter color. I have asked you to imagine this picture of Whistler's because it illustrates the first meaning of "values"—namely the different quantities of light that may be contained in one and the same color. I wish to illustrate now the other meaning of "values"—which has to do with the quantity of light contained in one color as compared with that in another color; for example, with the percentage of light contained in red as compared with that contained in blue, or green, or white, or any other color. For this purpose I have chosen the second in Whistler's series of symphonies in white: *The Little White Girl.* You can look at the reproduction and see for yourself that part of the color scheme, or color harmony, certainly the most important part, consists of the figure of the girl in white. You will notice how it illustrates what we have been saying about the other white girl. It is evenly lighted, there are no contrasts of extreme light and dark; the dress is a woven tissue of subtly different values of white. But in this case Whistler has treated the white dress as the theme or chief motive, as a musi-

cian would say, and has woven around it a composition of variations. It is the variations that I wish you now particularly to notice. They may be put under two heads. First, the reflection of the girl's head in the mirror; second, the various spots of color that surround her.

Suppose we begin with the latter. On the mantelshelf, close to the flesh-color of the girl's hand and the white of her sleeve is a Japanese jar, decorated in white and blue, and beside it a Japanese box covered with that smooth shiny surface called lacquer, and of a scarlet color, like a geranium. Down below appear the sprays of camelias with dark green glossy leaves and white and rosy blossoms. The fan repeats these colors, but with a difference. There is red in it, but of a different value to the red of the box and flowers; blue, but of another value than that on the vase; green, which differs in value from the leaves. Secondly, in the mirror is a repetition of the girl's head and of certain colors in the room. But the reflected head, as you can see in the reproduction, is in a lower key than the real one. The colors are lower in value; there is not so much light in them; for the mirror has absorbed some of it. You may test a mirror's appetite for light by holding your handkerchief close to it. You will see that the white of the reflection is much greyer than the handkerchief, or according to the quality of the glass, it may seem slightly blue. At any rate its value will be lower than that of the handkerchief; just as in this picture, the reflected colors of the

The Little White Girl. *J. M. Whistler.*

flesh and hair are lower in value than the actual head.

Now, looking at the picture, we note that the figure occupies about one half of the composition. It illustrates, as did *The Sower*, the use of a main diagonal line, though the feeling suggested by it is different. In *The Sower*, you will remember, the diagonal helped to give vigor and alertness to the figure; while here, on the contrary, its suggestion is one of very gracious quiet. For the slope of this diagonal is not so steep as in the other picture; nor do the directions of the arms and head present such abrupt contrasts. The left arm it is true, is nearly at right angles—itself a strong contrast; but it is so quietly laid along the mantel-shelf, which supports its weight, that there is no suggestion of effort. Meanwhile, the other arm, hanging so easily, is almost parallel to the main diagonal. The line also of the neck gently carries on the lines of the shoulders, and, as the head is slightly tilted back, its downward pressure is supported by the shoulder that rests on the shelf. The whole suggestion of the figure, in fact, is one of rest. There is no conscious bodily effort to interfere with the reverie in which the girl's mind is wrapt. She may be buried in her thoughts or she may be absorbed in the beauty of the box and vase, at which she seems to be looking. "Seems," I say, for it is difficult to be sure that she is conscious of them. Her gaze seems fixed to a far vision, as if she had begun by looking at these objects, and then, as her thoughts passed beyond them,

had let the gaze of her eyes follow. She seems buried in some girlish reverie, wrapt "in maiden meditation, fancy free." To me it is a very lovely figure not because of the features of the face—opinions may differ about the face being beautiful in the ordinary sense of having beautiful features. Its beauty to me lies in its expression; in its expression of some lovely mood of a girl's spirit. And I find the figure beautiful, because all through it is the movement of the same expression. This must have been in Whistler's mind when he painted her. But he was conscious, perhaps, of another side of her nature; that she had moods of brightness as well. At any rate he chose to contrast with the pensive calm of the girl herself the bright animated spots of color that surround her.

These spots of color, if you examine the picture carefully, really play the part of the shadows in the chiaroscuro of old pictures. Chiaroscuro, you remember, is the pattern of light and dark. Here the red box and the blue of the vase and the green and rose, of the camelias, yes, and even the face in the mirror, the marble shelf and fireplace—all represent the dark spots. But not dark in the old way of being shadows. They are dark as compared with the white of the dress, because their colors reflect less light than the white; their values are lower. Thus they serve the purposes of a dark contrast and yet they themselves are very light. This, in a nutshell, is what the new study of values, that was learnt from Velasquez and from Vermeer, and the

other Dutchmen, really means. It has enabled the artist to be even more true to life in the representation of objects, and at the same time to make his color-harmonies purer, clearer and more transparent; in one word, luminous; permeated, that is to say, with a suggestion of light, that in nature permeates the atmosphere and brings all objects into an appearance of harmonious unity.

How this particular picture is helped by a contrast, not of the old fashioned dark and light, as in the *Descent from the Cross* but of values of color, you can see for yourself, even from the reproduction. Still more would you realize it could you see the freshness and purity and gladsomeness of the original. Contrasts are needful in the composition of a work of art—they are one of the sources of its beauty. But imagine if you can, having shadows and darkness brought into contrast with this white robed figure! How they would contradict the expression of its exquisite purity and loveliness! As it is, the contrast of lower values does not in the least jar upon the expression; on the contrary, it gives it a greater meaning, since it suggests the atmosphere of happiness and brightness that has helped to color the beauty of the girl's spirit.

## CHAPTER XV

### COLOR (*Continued*)—TEXTURE, ATMOSPHERE, TONE

IN our previous talk about color we have laid great stress on the relation of one color to another. We have not thought of red, for example, as beautiful by itself, but as one of a family of colors, whose beauty consists in their relation to one another. And this related beauty we have spoken of as color harmony.

"Behold how good and joyful a thing it is, brethren, to dwell together in unity." So said the Psalmist, and his words might be applied to the unity of colors. He did not mean that everybody shall be of a like mind; there will always be differences of character among relations and the best of friends; but they will agree to differ; and their very differences make their unity or harmony the more real and good. Such is the harmony among colors; a union of differences or contrasts, as well as of similarities; of variety of values of color related into a harmonious unity.

On the other hand, though the beauty of colors is chiefly to be found in their relations to one another, there are separate possibilities of beauty to each color. And if each displays its own share of

these the general beauty of the harmony will be increased. Some of the possibilities are texture, quality, and tone.

Texture first. It is derived from the Latin word, *textum*,—something woven. Texture, in its original meaning, represents what has been produced by weaving. A lady, when she is shopping, presses the linen or silk, or cotton goods between her fingers in order to judge of their texture; whether it is closely or loosely woven, whether it is hard or smooth to the touch. Secondly, the word is used of a thing made by any other means than weaving. We speak, for example, of the texture of paper; and judge of its texture by the feel of it. Thirdly, it has come to be used of any material, whether made by man or nature. Thus we say that oak has a very close texture; glass is of firm but brittle texture; butter is greasy in texture, and so on. Finally, the word is used in a very general way to describe the character of any substance, especially the kind of surface that it has. So we say of the flesh of a healthy baby, that its texture is firm and silky; and we speak of the glossy texture of a polished table; the downy texture of a young chicken's breast, or the velvety texture of a peach. In one word, texture is the quality of a thing that we discover by touching it.

Texture appeals to our sense of touch. It excites in us a variety of feelings, pleasant or unpleasant. I need not tell you how disagreeable the texture of sharp rocks may be to your bare feet, when

you are bathing; what a relief it is to them to feel the texture of sand. Some of you, I am sure, are conscious of the pleasure you derive from handling things. You have discovered for yourselves what a lot of feeling you have in the tips of your fingers. You would enjoy handling the red box in Whistler's picture: and your touch would be very careful and delicate. Not alone because the box is valuable, but because it is only with a delicate touch that you can appreciate the exquisite smoothness of the lacquer.

The latter is a varnish composed of the gum of a certain tree. The Japanese workman lays it over the box very thinly, and, when it is thoroughly dried, rubs the surface until it is perfectly smooth. Then he applies another coating of lacquer and again rubs, continuing the process several times, until at last, the surface shows not a single flaw or inequality, and is smooth and silky beyond the description of any words. It is only by the look of it, and still more, by the feel of it, that you can appreciate the exquisite finish of the surface; and your delight in it is mingled with almost a reverence for the patience and love of the craftsman, who could work so long and so faithfully to make this little work of art perfect in its beauty and beautiful in its perfection. Compared with this lacquer box, the texture of an ordinary polished table or piano seems coarse and commonplace.

I might go on to speak of the different kinds of sensation that you would enjoy if you touched the waxy petals of the camelia. But it is not necessary.

For if you have a joy in the sense of touch I need not try to tell you about it. I will only ask you to wait a few minutes, until we see how the enjoyment derived from texture enters into the appreciation of a picture.

Meanwhile, if any of you have not as yet been conscious of getting this sort of pleasure through your fingers, let me say that this does not prove that you have no feeling for textures. I think that you have had it unconsciously; for I suspect that the pleasure that you take in flowers is not only because of their shape and color. As you have examined the beauty of roses, the texture of their petals has not escaped you. In one case, how silky; in another, how softly crumpled; in another, how delicately waxen! You may never have put these ideas into words, or even been conscious of them; but do you not see, now I mention these textures, that they have had a good deal to do with your pleasure in the roses? It may be, after all, the difference in the texture that makes you prefer one rose to another.

However, whether this be so or not, the fact remains that a great number of people derive pleasure from the textures of objects. So let us now see how the artist, who, as I have said before, has instincts and feelings like our own, takes advantage of this feeling for texture to add to the beauty of his picture.

We shall often see a picture in which the textures are not represented. Even modern pictures some-

times fail in this respect; and it is a very common fault with early American pictures, painted by artists who had not the advantage of training that the modern student enjoys. I will quote the case of John Singleton Copley, a very famous painter of the Colonial Period, who lived in Boston and made portraits of the well-to-do men and women of the time, just preceding the Revolution. Before the latter broke out, he went to England, where he spent the rest of his life and was highly thought of. His portraits are handsome as pictures for they represent men and women, mostly of elegant manners in handsome clothes. They also give the impression of being good likenesses. Yet his pictures lack animation. The figures and the costumes are stiff and hard. This is partly due to there being no suggestion of atmosphere surrounding them. The picture is not filled with air and light, as we found Vermeer's was. But there is another reason. Copley was unskilful in the presentation of textures.

The flesh and hair, the materials of the costumes, the furniture and ornaments, present no differences of texture. All seem to have a uniformly hard surface, as if they were made of wood or tin. The result is that the whole picture seems hard and stiff—lacking in animation. If you ask me why this lack of animation is caused by the artist's neglect of textures, I think the answer is that Copley has not given to everything in his picture its own separate, particular character. For when you come to think of it,—and the dictionary meaning of the word

textures, bears me out—the character of everything depends so much upon its texture; whether it is hard or soft, smooth or rough, glossy or dull, and so on. Now, if there were a number of girls and boys in the room, all sitting round with the same dull expression on their faces, we should say that the whole group lacked animation. What makes a party animated and lively, is the fact that it is composed of a number of persons, each having a separate character to which he or she gives free play. The more easily and naturally each exhibits his or her character, the more animated and lively will be the fun of the party.

Now, do you not see how this applies to a picture? The artist invites a number of different textures to his party or composition. Surely the party will be lacking in animation if he does not bring out the special character of each. The lady's face and hands will not contribute their full share to the animation of the whole composition, unless the character of their texture is expressed. It will not be enough to represent only the coloring of the flesh, for its beauty depends also upon its firmness and softness. Her satin dress will lose half its charm, if we are only made to see its shine and gloss. We know satin to be also soft and thin, ready to arrange itself in all sorts of delicate folds. This is a chief charm in the character of satin; and if this particular satin does not exhibit these qualities of texture, the dress will not do its proper share in helping the animation of the figure. Well! if you agree with me about the

satin dress, I think that you will see that the same thing holds good of the table on which her arm is resting, and the glass vase with carnations in it that stands near her hand. Do you not think that the character of the hand will be better expressed, if the separate characters also of the polished wood, the hard shiny cut glass, and the soft velvety flowers are playing their part? They may not be so important as the woman and her dress, but in a composition as in a party, everybody must do their share, if the affair is to be a complete success.

The first great masters in the rendering of textures were the old Flemish artists of the Fifteenth Century—the brothers Hubert and Jan van Eyck, for example, and Hans Memling. Their country,—what we now call Belgium—had long been famous for its textiles. Silks, linens, cloths and velvets—its gold and silver and other metal work, its manufacture and decorating of glass. The Flemish were a nation of craftsmen, skilled in the production of the most beautiful articles of domestic use and church worship. And this love for objects of beautiful workmanship was shared by her painters. They represented them in their pictures. They painted not only the character of the men and women of the time, but the character of the life in which they lived, and did this by surrounding them with the furniture and objects that gave distinction to their lives. So the very rug on the floor, the glass in the windows, the mirror on the wall in its highly wrought frame, as well as the clothes worn by these

quiet, serious men and women, have a choiceness of feeling. The room is not simply furnished, much less is it cluttered up with all kinds of tasteless Department Store "objets d'art." Every thing in it has its own distinction of beauty, suggesting the taste and refinement of its owners, and so by its own character contributing to our appreciation of the character of the men and women in the picture.

Another great master of texture was the German artist of the Sixteenth Century, Hans Holbein the younger. He too loved things of delicate and exquisite craftsmanship and often made designs of such things for the workmen of his native city, Augsburg. So he was fond of introducing such articles into his pictures. It was a joy to him to paint them, each one with its own individual character of texture. Still, notwithstanding his love of them, he only puts them into his pictures when their character will help the character of his main subject. So, when he paints the portrait of a rich merchant of taste, like Georg Gyze in his office, he surrounds him with many objects related to his work—inkpot, seal, scissors, ledger, and can for holding string, letters, and a scale for weighing money. There is a profusion of beautifully fashioned objects, but they all by their separate characters help us to understand more fully the character of the merchant himself. On the other hand, since characterization was Holbein's main purpose, he treats the portrait of the great scholar Erasmus, differently. Here he introduces only a small writing

desk, a sheet of paper on it, and a pen in the scholar's hand. These remind us that Erasmus was a writer; while the handsome rings on his fingers and a piece of finely woven material on the wall, tell us of another side of his character—that beside his love of learning, he had a taste for the beautiful things of life.

Looking back then over what we have been saying, we find that when the artist suggests to us the different kinds of sensation we may receive from touching things, he greatly increases the expressiveness of his pictures. By rendering or representing the textures, as well as the form and color of objects, he accomplishes at least four results. Firstly, he makes the objects more life-like; we feel as if we might really handle them and receive the sensation that such objects, if they were real, would give us. Secondly, he gives us a more keen enjoyment of their beauty; consciously or unconsciously we receive a sensation of the pleasure of handling them. Thirdly, the increased life-likeness and beauty increases the general animation of the whole picture. Fourthly, this rendering of the separate character of each object contributes to our understanding and appreciation of the character of the whole subject. To sum up, the rendering of textures suggests reality, beauty, animation, and character.

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Atmosphere we have already alluded to in previous chapters. We saw how Vermeer filled the scene of his picture with lighted air; and, in dis-

cussing color, we talked of it first as light, and then went on to study how the light which is in the air affects the light which is reflected from all objects that are visible. We found that colors differ from one another in the quantity of light they contain: in what artists call their values; the value of red, for example, being different from the value of blue or green. Also we found that each single color may have variations of value, according to the quantity and direction of the light which falls upon it.

All this, you may say, has more to do with light than atmosphere. But the two are really united. What we call atmosphere, as you know, is the volume of gases which surrounds the earth. The particles from these gases are lit up by the light. We cannot see the particles, only the reflections of light thrown off by them. But though we cannot see the particles themselves, they can interfere with our seeing of other things. It is the layers or veils of atmosphere that lie between us and a distant hill, that prevent our seeing the bright green grass on the latter and the dark green fir trees. Seen through the atmosphere, the colors of the hill appear subdued, the very form and bulk of the ground flattened and, perhaps, indistinct.

This effect of atmosphere is one of the things that we are now going to discuss. The other is that atmosphere penetrates everywhere. Suppose we begin with the second point. The atmosphere is in one respect like water; it is a fluid. It flows in and out and around about and fills the whole space that

is not occupied by some other body. But have you thought what this means to an artist? Or at least to some artists; for we said that Copley's pictures contained little or no suggestion of atmosphere. And the same may be said of a great many pictures by modern artists. They represent the form and color of things, but do not suggest that they are surrounded, or, as is often said, enveloped in atmosphere.

Why is this? Well! in the first place, as you remember, there are many artists who do not profess to represent nature. When they use nature as a model, it is for the purpose only of getting the forms of nature, and these they improve upon, as they will tell you, so as to make the forms in their picture "ideally perfect." These "Academic" or "classic" painters [1] as I have already said, think of art as separate from nature. On the other hand, even among those who think of art as a means of interpreting nature, there are many artists who never put atmosphere into their pictures. Or, if they do, it is not nature's atmosphere.

Then what sort of atmosphere is it? I call it a studio atmosphere, because it is manufactured in the studio. The artist, feeling the need of softening the hard outlines of his figures and of subduing any harshness of color, spreads over the picture thin layers of transparent, slightly colored varnish. Through these glazes, as they are called, the forms and colors are seen, somewhat as if you were look-

[1] See page 88.

ing at them through a piece of colored glass, and the effect is to merge or bathe them in a glow of atmosphere.

This was a usual practice with the great colorists of the Italian Renaissance. Correggio's pictures, for example, are prized for their golden glow. It is one of the reasons of their beauty. But then, his idea was not to interpret nature. His subjects were drawn from the Bible, or the Christian religion, or Greek Mythology, and he treated them as his imagination suggested. He saw them through the glow of his own imagination, and surrounded them with a glow that seems to place them far away from actual things in a beautiful world of their own. Similarly, modern colorists, when they create pictures out of their own imagination, will suffuse them with an artificial atmosphere that helps to express the spirit of the scene. In fact, these atmospheric effects, produced by glazing, are beautiful and proper in their place. But their place is not in pictures that profess to be studies of nature. In these it is as wrong to suggest an unnatural atmosphere, as it is to leave out all suggestion of atmosphere whatsoever, which is, perhaps, the more usual fault.

Since the true rendering of atmosphere is a part of the true representation of light and color, you will not be surprised to learn that it appeared in the pictures of Velasquez and of the Dutchmen of the Seventeenth Century. We have already spoken of it in the case of Vermeer. It was from these artists that modern colorists, beginning about 1860, have

learned to study the effects of atmosphere and light. They have carried the study even further than the older men. Indeed, the rendering of light and atmosphere has been the most distinct triumph of modern painting. There are two reasons for this.

One is, that with the advance of scientific studies and mechanical inventions, people have become more than ever interested in the every day facts of life; and the writers, painters, and sculptors, following with the stream, have studied more and more how to represent life and its surroundings, not as we may dream they should be, but as they are known to our actual experience. They have become ardent "realists" or "naturalists." "Realists," because they are occupied with what we are in the habit of calling the realities of life.[1] "Naturalists," because they love nature and try to represent her actual appearances, as they are enveloped in and affected by light and atmosphere.

The second cause of the modern advance in rendering these qualities is again due to scientific discoveries. Scientific men have made a close study of light and color and the painters have profited by the results. Painting, in a measure, has joined hands with science.

However, now that we have seen why some artists do not put atmosphere into their pictures, and

[1] Later on I shall have something to say about these so called realists. I shall say to them, as Hamlet said to Horatio, "There are more things in Heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy."

The Mystic Marriage of St. Catharine. *Correggio.*

that among those who do some manufacture an atmosphere of their own, while others try to render nature's atmosphere, let us study for ourselves the effect of atmosphere in nature. It will help us, if I begin by telling what we expect to find. First then, that the outlines of objects are softened; secondly, that the bulk of things seems flattened; and thirdly, that as objects recede or stand further off from our eyes, their forms becomes more and more indistinct and their colors change.

As to the first. Suppose you are standing on a street or country road, and a wagon passes you. While it is close in front of you, the body of the wagon and the wheels and the man driving, all are clearly outlined; you can distinguish distinctly the parts of the wagon and the character of the man's figure, whether it is fat or thin, strong or weak-looking, and so on. But, as the wagon passes along the road, its appearance changes. At first, it is the smaller details that disappear; they have become merged in the general mass; then the outlines of this mass grow less and less distinct; you could not be sure now, unless you had seen the wagon close, exactly what its build is; nor does one part seem nearer to you than another, its bulk has become flattened, and gradually the whole affair looks to be only a patch of color against the color of the road.

Do you remember, it was as patches we saw the cows which we met early in our talk? The reason then given for their appearance was that our eyes were not strong enough to distinguish their details

at such a distance. And this reason also holds good in the case of the wagon. But it is not only the distance that reduces our power of seeing, but also the layers, or veils of atmosphere that hang between us and the object. We are sure of this on a foggy day, when the mist lies low over the country or city, and trees and tall buildings loom up like blurs, and everything beyond the distance of a few hundred paces is blotted from sight. But the fog or mist is only the atmosphere more moist than usual and with its moisture condensed by cooling.

When you breathe on a mirror, the damp of your breath is condensed by the coolness of the glass. A film of mist forms over the mirror. Of an evening you may see the mist lying over the river or meadows; for the sun is gone down and the earth and air are cooling. But the upper air cools more quickly than the lower part, since the latter is still warmed by the heat stored in the earth. So, as the cooler air from above drops down, it acts like a mirror to the breath of the earth or the air that lies close over it; and this air is condensed into mist. All through the night both air and earth are cooling, but the earth more slowly, so that there is still a meeting of cooler and warmer air and consequent condensations, and the mist is hovering over the meadows when the next morning's sun rises. As the sun mounts up, it begins to spread its warmth and the upper air is the first to feel it. Growing warm, it rises, drawing up after it the cooler air below. And as the cooler air is sucked up, the

warmer air closes in behind it; until, as this circulation of cool and warm continues, the warmth at last reaches down to the mists above the earth. And then commences that beautiful sight that you may see on some summer mornings. The mists, that a while ago lay like a blanket over the sleeping earth, begin to stir, as if they themselves were awakening from sleep. They tremble a little, then slowly stretch themselves, and begin to rise to meet the warmth of day. And as they rise, little wisps of mist become detached from the main body and float up and disappear, until gradually the whole rising mass is rent asunder by the currents of warm air into shreds and wreaths, which curl and float and soar and at last lose themselves in the warmth that now wraps the earth.

Later in the day, if the weather is very hot the air, close above the ground, becomes so heated that it rises very quickly, and we see a shimmer of light upon its shifting patches. I mention this, because I wish you to think of atmosphere, not only as veils of gauze hung between us and objects we are looking at, but also as a moving, palpitating, vibrating fluid. We will talk a little more about this presently. Meanwhile, let us note some of the effects of atmosphere upon form and color.

We have mentioned that it softens the outlines of objects. This is only another way of saying that the objects appear less distinct; that even a chimney, though it cuts against the sky in strong contrast, has not really hard sharp outlines. At first

sight you will think, perhaps, that it has; just as the cornices of the roofs may seem to you to have hard lines, and the windows and doorways to be sharply outlined. But they do not appear so to an artist's eye, and will not to yours in time, if you are observant. Suppose an artist with pen and ink should draw one of these houses, using a straight edge to make the outline hard and sharp. This is how an architect draws the design of a house, because his object is to make an exact drawing for the builder to work by. But, if you have seen one of these architectural drawings, you will recognise, I think, that it does not look natural; that somehow or other it is too precise and tight and hard to suggest the appearance of an actual house. If this were his object, the architect himself would draw the house differently. He would make what is called a free-hand drawing. He would no longer represent the edges of cornices and chimneys and so on, with continuous lines; he would "break them up"; lifting his pen for a moment and leaving a tiny space of white before he continues the line; making the line thicker or thinner as he went along, and occasionally pressing on his pen to produce a dot. In these ways he will break up all the edges and outlines that they may not be too hard, but may have the less distinct appearance that the lines of the actual house present to his eye. For the same reason when he draws any bits of carving, such as the capitals of the columns of the front door, he will not represent every detail exactly, as if he were

making a working drawing for the carver. He will leave out some and break up others, so that, although he plainly indicates the style and character of the ornament, it will not seem hard and sharp, but softened, and a trifle indistinct, as the capital appears to his eye. He will, in fact, make allowances for the softening effects of atmosphere.

Up to this point we have imagined the penmanship to be concerned only with the lines. Now let us see how a great pen-artist, like Joseph Pennell, or Edwin A. Abbey, would carry his drawing further. He would see the house, not as a skeleton of lines, but as a mass, part of which is silhouetted against the sky, while the rest is seen in relation to the other buildings or objects that stand near it. Each according to his own individual technique, that is to say, his own particular way of using the pen, will make his building a mass distinct from the masses of the other buildings, of the ground, and of the sky. And on the masses of buildings he will make the windows appear as they do in the actual building—namely, as patches, darker in color than the walls. All this he will do, because to his eye the different objects, under the influence of the atmosphere, appear as masses of various colors in relation to one another. More than this, when you have grown to appreciate fully the work of Pennell and Abbey, you will find that, though it is done in black and white, it seems to suggest color.

Elsewhere I have spoken of the fact that many artists, especially modern ones, see nature as an

arrangement of colored spaces or masses in relation to one another. This implies that they are very little conscious of the edges or outlines of the masses. If they think of them at all, it is to try and prevent your noticing them in their pictures. They paint, for example, the head, and shoulders, and cheek of a man, a bust portrait—with a dark background. If you examine the picture closely, you will not find a sharp line, separating the head from the background. In fact the color of the hair and cheek seems to extend a little way into the dark of the background. The artist has dragged his brush round the head, so that it is impossible to say just where the background begins. The reason for this you understand, as soon as you step back and look at the picture from a short distance off. The head appears very solid; we can believe there is really a hard skull beneath the full flesh of the cheeks and the tight skin of the forehead. Yet the head does not seem to be stuck against the background, like a postage stamp on an envelope. Indeed, if the picture is well painted, the dark part is not really a background. That is to say, it is not merely something behind the head; it seems to have depth and to go back, but it also comes forward and surrounds the head. The latter does not stick out of the picture, it keeps its place back within the frame, enveloped in atmosphere that, though it is very dark, is penetrable. You feel, that is to say, that your hand could be pushed through it without coming up against some wall, as it were, that would stop it.

Now I particularly wished you to notice that the head suggested to us that hardness of the skull and the varying firmness and tightness of the flesh. For it proves that the softening of the outline will not interfere with the feeling of hardness and strength, or firmness in the mass. The effect, indeed, is to increase it, since out attention is concentrated on the head and not distracted to the outline. On the other hand, do not suppose that the softening of outlines is always intended to increase the suggestion of solidity. It may be part of an entirely opposite intention; namely, to lose sight of the idea of solidity of mass. For example, the French landscape artist, Corot, often represented the masses of the trees as soft, dark blurs against the soft light of the sky. For he loved especially the early dawn and late evening, when the light is very faint and in the hush the trees loom up like quiet spirits. He wished you to feel their presence, but not to be conscious of their solidity and bulk. He, you see, used the softened outline for a different purpose; which shows that in art, as in other matters, a single principle may be applied variously in different cases.

These tree-presences of Corot are painted very flatly. The roundness of their bulk disappears into a flat mass. It was one of the ways in which he avoided the suggestion of solidity. But here again comes in the fact that a principle may have other applications; for flatness does not necessarily make the object appear unsubstantial. A house does not look so, yet its front may be flat. And Corot, as

other artists, and as you may, if you use your eyes, had discovered that in the open air all objects appear flatter than they do indoors. The reason is that in the case of a room lighted by windows, the light is always stronger near the windows than it is in parts of the room further removed. The light is unequally distributed, so that there are more shadows to throw up the bulk of objects. But out of doors the light is more diffused; more equally distributed. Moreover, we view things from a greater distance, so that more atmosphere intervenes. The effect of both these facts is to make the masses of objects seem flatter. The lawn from a little distance may look very smooth; but, when you walk over it, you find the grass needs to be cut and the bumps to be rolled before you can play croquet. That maple, too, is a sturdy, solid fellow, but as you see its mass of pale green against the darker mass of hemlock, both seem flatter than they do when you are climbing among their branches.

In speaking of the softening of outline and flattening of bulk due to atmosphere we have frequently alluded to the effect of distance on the appearance of objects. The further off the latter are, the more atmosphere will intervene, the less distinct will they appear. In the case of distant hills, the ups and downs of the ground, the bulk of the trees, even the stability and massiveness of "the everlasting hills," may be softened and flattened into what seems to be only a faint mass of color.

Perhaps we have walked over these hills and

know them to be carpeted with grass; the greens also of the maples, oaks, cypress, each with its separate hue, attracted our attention. But to-day, from a distance, all these greens are lost in a vaporous hue of blue. It is this effect of atmosphere on color that we will now talk about. It is easy to notice in the case of the hills because of the great quantity of atmosphere that intervenes between us and them. But, if there were a row of maples extending from the hills to us, so placed that we could look along their entire length, we should find the appearance of their color gradually changing, as they recede from our eyes. In a word, to the sensitive eye of the artist the colors of even nearby objects are affected by atmosphere.

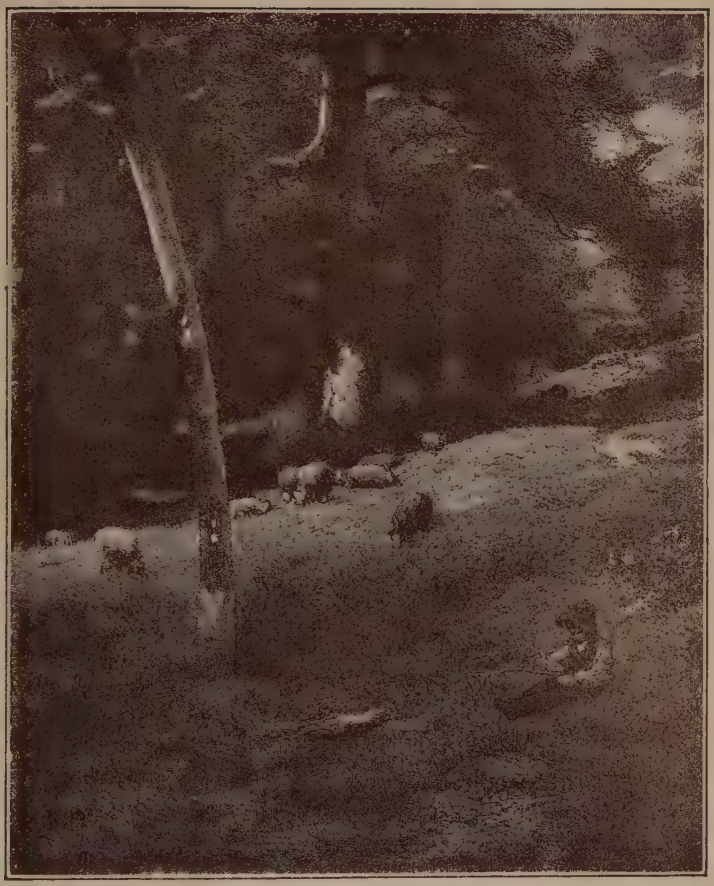
Now, those hills appear to be blue; another day, they will incline more to grey; yet another day to violet or purple, or pinkish. In winter time, around New York, they would very likely take on a dry, whitish color. In fact, the color will vary according to the condition of the atmosphere and the quality of the light; depending upon how moist or dry, how warm or chill, the atmosphere may be, and whether the light is yellow or golden, grey or white, full or feeble, and so on. It is these constant variations of lighted atmosphere that give continually fresh interest to the beauty of nature. Nature never wearies us by being always the same. It is like a human face, whose expression is continually changing.

Sometimes we see a beautiful human face, with

almost perfect features. But behind that beautiful mask may be a very dull, uninteresting mind. If so, the expression of the face will be passive, the opposite, that is to say, to active. It will not leap from grave to gay; kindle, sparkle, grow tender, or angry and joyful by turns. It will be—"faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly *null*"—no expression. And we may even tire of its beauty; while a face, less perfect in features, may win us more and more and hold our interest by the charm of its continually varying expression. The more we think of it, the more do we realise that beauty depends upon expression. It is the same with nature as with the human face. Its beauty is affected by expression and this is produced by the varieties in the lighted atmosphere.

A moment's thought will satisfy you of this. Nature's features vary with the seasons, but change little from day to day. Every morning, during the summer vacation, the same objects greet your eye, but how differently you feel towards them, according to what we call the weather, which after all is the condition of the atmosphere. One day the familiar features of the landscape will take on an expression of gladness, some other day of dullness; and the more we study the features, the more variable will their expression appear from hour to hour, day to day, and season to season.

I spoke just now of the movement of the atmosphere. It is a fluid, that one day may be as still as a forest pool, another day may be stirred like the



Light and Shade. *George Inness.*

ocean. We cannot see its particles, but we do see the light reflected from them; and, I suppose, it is the differences in the appearances of the lighted reflections that make us conscious of the stillness or movement of the atmosphere on days when there is no wind. We need not be very sensitive to nature to notice these differences of the atmosphere at different seasons of the year; how, on certain winter days, the air seems absolutely motionless; while on other days it seems alert and sprightly; how in early spring it seems astir with gentle life, while in summer or autumn it may be alive with animation or heavy with drowsy languor.

The motionless air of winter has been rendered with marvellous truth by John H. Twachtman; the stir of spring by Dwight W. Tryon; the active air of summer by Childe Hassam, and its languorous drowsiness by George Inness. All these are American artists, whom I mention only as examples. For much of the beauty of modern art, both American and foreign, is due to the sensitive rendering of the variations in the atmosphere. For, the best artists now-a-days are not satisfied to paint the features of nature only; they aim to depict the varying expressions on her face. And the chief cause, as I have said, of these variations is the constant change in the conditions of the lighted atmosphere.

## CHAPTER XVI

### COLOR (*Continued*)—TONE

WE shall frequently hear the words tone, tonal, tonality, applied to pictures. People say, for example, this picture is rich in tone; that has fine tonal qualities; another has a delicate tonality. It is rather difficult to explain what these words mean, for they do not seem to be used in the same way by everybody. However, let us try.

It is clearly a word derived from music, where its meaning is more definite. We speak of a piano's tone, by which we mean that, though it sounds the same notes as another piano, the quality of the sounds differs. We shall be using the word quality often in the present chapter, so let us be sure we understand its meaning. It is from the Latin word *qualis*, which means of what kind. Of what kind is this piece of dress goods; what is its quality, compared with another piece, at first sight similar? Is it all wool, for example, while the other is cotton mixture? Is it softer, while the other is harder and drier? Will the one stand washing, while the other will shrink? Similarly, when the same note is struck on two pianos the tone of one may be rich,

mellow, resonant, while that of the other is thin, raw, and metallic.

Why is the tone superior? You know, I suppose, that when a piano string is struck it vibrates. That is to say, it ceases to be a straight line, and becomes agitated into a series of waves. In order to increase the volume of the sound a thin layer of wood, called the sound board, is placed beneath the strings. As the string vibrates, this board vibrates in sympathy, and so the volume of sound is increased and enriched. Now the least thing may disturb the perfection of this sympathetic vibration. Accordingly, the superiority of the one piano is due to the fact that all its parts are of finer make and material, and are more perfectly adjusted to one another. They are in so perfect a relation, that there is no jar in any part, and thus the body of the instrument is a united whole.

The tone of the piano, then, is due to the perfect relation existing between the parts of the piano. Applying this idea to a picture: it would seem that tone is the result of all the colors being so perfectly related to one another, that the vibration or rhythm of the whole color-harmony is increased.

Now this is certainly, in a general way, the meaning of the word tone. So, although the word itself is new to you, the idea contained in it is not. We have talked a good deal about color-relations, rhythm, and harmony. You remember our talk on Vermeer's picture. Well, his is a tonal picture, because of the perfect relation of all the colors to one an-

other. It is beautiful in tone; its tonality is exquisite. And do you remember one particular feature of its exquisiteness? I pointed out to you that it is full of lighted atmosphere, and that the atmosphere seems to vibrate; that its rhythm passes through and through the picture, uniting all the masses of color into a harmonious whole. We noted the difference between this kind of rhythm and that in Raphael's *Jurisprudence*, where the rhythm is the result of line. You could not describe that picture as tonal; for in it color plays a very unimportant part. Raphael was busied with the relations, not of color, but of line.

I have reminded you of the rhythm of atmosphere in Vermeer's picture, because some people describe tone, as the result of fusing all the forms and colors into a whole by enveloping them in atmosphere. But I think, if you have followed our talks carefully, you will see that this use of the word tone is pretty much the same as the one we have arrived at. For you cannot see the effects of atmosphere except in relation to the coloring of nature. And I like our explanation better than this one, because it is broader, and therefore includes more. It includes, for example, all Japanese prints. Many of them exhibit no suggestion of atmosphere; yet they are always tonal in the sense that their colors are in perfect relation.

Now, let me tell you of another definition of tone, which again is included in our own. Some people will tell you that a picture is tonal, because there is

some one prevailing hue of color in it. By "prevailing" we mean that some one color plays the most important part. In Vermeer's picture, you may remember, it was blue. The girl's skirt made a strong spot of blue. We are aware of other colors in the picture, but they play subsidiary parts. What we are most conscious of is a sense of blue throughout the picture—a prevailing tone of blue. So in Whistler's *White Girl—Symphony in White, Number One,* there is a prevailing tone of white.

But this is only another way of saying that in each picture the colors are in a perfect relation to one another. Whether there are more or fewer colors, and whether we receive an impression of many colors or one in particular, does not really affect the question. When all is said and done, tone is the result of color relations, so arranged that they produce a rhythmic harmony.

* * * * * *

An artist, when he paints a tonal picture, has in mind the relative dark and light of colors, and their relative coolness and warmth. Let me explain. First the relative coolness or warmth of colors. The artist regards blue as the coolest hue. As a matter of fact violet reflects even less light than blue; still, for his practical purposes, an artist says that the cool hue is blue, and he associates with it violet and green. On the other hand, yellow, he treats as warm, and associates with it red and orange.

And, if you consider for a moment, the distinc-

tion of warm and cool hues, which is practised by artists and founded on the nature of light, appeals to our own experience. You will have no hesitation in feeling that a bunch of violets, surrounded by green leaves, gives you a feeling of coolness, as compared with another bunch composed of red and yellow poppies.

Accordingly, if an artist has made up his mind that his tonal harmony shall be a cool one, he either composes it entirely of cool hues, or sees to it that some one or all of them shall "prevail." The warmer hues may be introduced for the sake of contrast, but very sparingly. And, of course, he will reverse his use of the hues, if he wishes the tone to be a warm one. This you could have guessed for yourselves; but I point it out because most people, I believe, prefer a warm picture. If it represents the sun setting in a mass of crimson over which the sky is orange, passing to yellow; and the effect of this warm light is shown on the surrounding trees and meadow, so that everything seems to be kindled into a dreamy warmth, we easily find the picture very beautiful. It is so attractive in its richness and mellow warmth, that the quiet coolness of that picture opposite may seem tame by comparison, and we pass it by. On the other hand, if, recognising the difference of the intention, we study the latter picture carefully, we may very likely come to admire it even more than the warmer one, by reason of the very quietness of its appeal, or because of the purity and freshness of feeling that probably pervade it.

And now for the artist's other habit of considering the relative lightness and darkness of hues. It comes into play, whether his tonal arrangement be a cool one or a warm one. For by this means he introduces contrasts of color; and as we have pointed out, it is by contrasts as well as by similarities, that a harmony is produced.

There are two ways of considering the difference between light and dark. One is to treat it as an arrangement of *chiaroscuro*, the other as an arrangement of *values*. This is a distinction that I have already explained; but I will refresh your memory of it, in its special application to tone.

Chiaroscuro, as you remember, means light and dark. So it could be used of the light and dark of values; but, as a matter of fact, it is applied to the distribution of light and shadows, adopted by the artists of older times, and still used by many modern ones. In applying it, they represented the light, as coming from one direction, usually from behind their backs; and as striking the objects and figures in the picture at an angle, either on the right side or on the left. They also took care that the light should be concentrated or particularly bright at one spot. On the contrary, the artist who considers the light and dark of values, sees the light *in* the scene he is painting, and observes that it pervades all parts of it.

But, to return to the chiaroscuro; its effect is to produce strong contrasts of light and shade: high lights, nearly white in the parts most exposed to the

light, and shadows almost black, in the parts most removed. To offset these strong contrasts the artist uses strong hues. The pure colors of red, yellow, green, blue, may be used in large masses. The result is a tonal harmony of great richness, striking magnificence, or surprising impressiveness.

Of the last kind is Rubens' *Descent from the Cross.* If you study a photograph of it, you will see that the light *does* come from within the scene. It flows from the Saviour's body; and the light, as it spreads, illumines certain parts of the surrounding figures, especially the heads and hands; just the parts in fact, in which there is most expression of feeling. The sacred Body has the pallor of death, it is almost white, while black prevails elsewhere throughout the picture, the only other colors being the flesh tints of the faces and hands, and some dull green and red. It is an admirable example of the strong contrast of black and white, and, let me add, of the amazing effect that such contrast has on the imagination. For it is a picture that arouses one's emotions of awe and pity and reverence to an extraordinary degree; and the more you study it, the more you will realise that the source of its appeal is the chiaroscuro. The latter, though the light is within the scene, is purely arbitrary. Rubens, that is to say, did not try to imitate the effects of real light and darkness; he chose to be the arbiter or judge of how he would distribute them. And in the arrangement he had three purposes. First, he wished to secure the modeling of the figures; note the mus-

cular force he has given to some of the men; the pathetic droop of the Virgin's figure; and the pitiable limpness of the Saviour's form. Secondly, he was able to make this composition of contrasts one of most impressive grandeur. Thirdly, as I have already hinted in speaking of the figures of the Saviour and the Virgin, he could by means of this superb invention of light and darkness, fill us with profound emotion.

So much for the older method of considering the relations between light and dark. The modern one, depending on the light and dark of values, derived from the example of Velasquez and of Vermeer and other Dutchmen of the Seventeenth Century, I have recently explained in connection with Whistler's *White Girl, Symphony in White Number Two.* So I will only remind you that in this picture there is practically no contrast of shadow. The whole scene is bathed in a uniform light. But the contrast of dark is obtained by putting in certain objects, the red box, the blue vase, and so on, the values of which are lower than that of the white dress. The artist has thought of darkness, not as the result of shadow, but of certain colors being darker in themselves, because they reflect less light than others. If this is not quite clear to you, perhaps it will be, if you refer to the chapter in which this picture is discussed.

On the other hand, the modern artist, even if he works by values rather than by chiaroscuro, must often wish to paint a scene that does involve shad-

ows. We know that the scene may be filled with light and yet there will be certain places where the light is intercepted, so that shadows are formed. Our lawn in summer is aglow with warm light, but every tree and bush casts its shadow. Or the same spot in winter is covered with snow and the air is bright with cool light; yet here and there a trunk of a tree spreads a thin layer of shadow.

But the difference is in the way the modern artist regards shadow. He has studied nature for the purpose of representing the actual effects of nature; and, in so doing, has discovered that the secret of all effects is due to the action of light. So he has learned to look at everything, shadows included, in its relation to light. A shadow to him, then, is not something different from light; it is a lessening of the light. Some of the light has been intercepted by the foliage of the tree, so that less light reaches the ground. It may be that very little light filters through the leaves. But, whether more or little, the spot from which the light has been intercepted, still contains some light. Even what we usually call the shadows have light in them.

So, while chiaroscuro is a contrast of light and dark, the contrast of values may better be described as one of light and less light.

Observe how this works. Since the modern artist sees light in shadows, he also sees color in them. And their color varies according to the quality of the light and according to the local color of the spot affected. The local color of your lawn is green; there-

fore, even under the trees, where little light reaches the grass, the latter will still contain a greenish hue, though the value of it will be much lower than that of the sunlit lawn. On the other hand, the hue of the shadow will also be affected by the quality of the light, differing according as the light is dull or brilliant, and as it inclines to white or yellow. This is too intricate a subject to attempt to discuss here, but I mention it in order that, if you are wide awake and interested, you may amuse yourself by studying these effects in your walks abroad.

A simple way of starting the subject is to study the hue of the shadow cast by your hand on a sheet of white paper. I am working by the light of a Welsbach burner, and the shadow of my hand is a pale reddish purple. The other day, on a bright February morning, I laid my hand on a piece of white paper and the shadow was bluish. In each case, owing to the amount of light reflected from the white paper, the shadow was very transparent, and beautiful in its delicacy and softness.

Well, this little example illustrates what artists have discovered about shadows lying on snow. They are very transparent, very delicate, and tend toward a hue of blue or plum color, according to the quantity of light.

Now to sum up our remarks on tone. When we speak of a picture having tonal qualities, we mean that the artist has so combined the related darks and lights and the related coolness and warmth of his colors that he has produced a harmony, threaded

through and through with a suggestion of rhythm or vibration. And the vibration will be most felt, when the suggestion of atmosphere pervades the picture.

In the case of the *Descent from the Cross* we have already hinted at the power of tone to arouse emotion. I may add that tone always makes a strong appeal to feeling—to abstract feeling. The tonal harmony of an opal, whose pinks and greens are suffused with creamy atmosphere, arouses in us delight, quite apart from any suggestion to our mind. The delight is one of pure feeling. Can you not see that, if an artist uses the tonal harmony of the opal as a color scheme for a picture, the harmony would still delight us in an abstract way? It would be interwoven now with the subject of his picture, and we need not try, nor do we wish to separate them. But the sentiment of the figure or the scene will be all the more tender and lovely for the harmony with which it is suffused.

I have in mind, for example, the pictures by the American artist, Thomas W. Dewing. They show you one or two women standing or sitting, apparently lost in reverie, while placed beside them may be a table and a vase and on the wall a mirror. If you ask me what the picture is about, I will say: Nothing. There is no subject to them in the sense that you can describe: who the girl is, why she is there, and what she is doing. So, instead of talking to you about the figures, I should try to draw your attention to the subtlety and beauty of the tonal har-

mony. I should recommend you to look at it with a mind as free from outside thoughts, as when you were looking at the opal. Then by degrees, perhaps, as the beauty of the tone winds itself about your imagination, you will begin to find some sentiment of beauty suggested by the girl herself.

What I wish you to understand is that an artist, who has the gift of composing tonal harmonies, employs them to express the abstract feelings or emotions that he has regarding his subject. A celebrated example is Whistler's *Portrait of the Artist's Mother*, that now hangs in the Luxembourg Gallery, in Paris. I expect you have seen photographs of it and remember that it represents an oldish lady, in a white lace cap and black gown, with her hands folded over a handkerchief on her lap. We see her figure seated in profile, in front of a grey wall. On it are two little black-framed pictures, and on one side hangs a dark green curtain.

When it was first exhibited the artist called it "An Arrangement in Black and Grey." It may be that he did not wish to drag his Mother into publicity or make a parade of his feelings as a son. But there was another reason, a much greater one. The abstract feelings that he had for his Mother—the love, reverence, and appreciation of her dignity and tenderness—took color in his artist's mind in an arrangement of black and grey. What a poet might have put into the rhythm and harmony of his verse, Whistler has expressed through the rhythm of a tonal harmony of color.

Another artist who was not a tonalist, might have contrived to put into the face and hands and into the lines of the figure as much dignity and gracious tenderness. But his picture would not move us so deeply as this one. For Whistler—how shall I describe it?—has woven the dignity and tenderness into every part of the canvas. The mother sits alone with her own thoughts, but all about her is the music of color, choiring the love and reverence of her son. No wonder the picture takes its hold upon us; until we see in it not *a* mother, but the *type* of what the conception of Mother means to us.

Its tonal harmony is one that is distinguished by sobriety and reticence. It consists of quiet and sober colors; it does not talk to our hearts in brilliant glowing words. It moves us rather by its silence and reserve, its reticence. I mention this because, at first, perhaps, you will be more attracted by brilliant and glowing harmonies; and they are beautiful too. They may fill us, as those of Rubens do, with triumphant joy; or plunge us into poignant emotion as do Rousseau's sunsets. But, just as our capacity of feeling knows no limits, so there is no limit to the variety of the tonal harmonies that may stir it. And we shall grow to find some of the most exalting and beautiful sensations in those harmonies that are very quiet, subtle, and that speak to our imagination in a "still small voice."

As a farewell illustration, to sum up the meaning of the quality and expression of tone, let me return to sound tones. Have you ever thought of quality

and expression in the case of your own voice? I do not mean the singing voice. Many of us do not possess this kind of voice; but we all have a speaking and reading voice. What are the quality and expression of yours? I am thinking now of the way you use it; of the quality and expression of the sounds you utter.

When you speak; do you drawl "through your nose" or chatter very quickly? Are the sounds shrill or harsh or monotonous? Perhaps you have never stopped to consider. It is astonishing how few people do. Most people think of their voice only as a contrivance for uttering words: they turn it on and off like a faucet and let the words run. How frequently one sees a pretty girl or woman, tastefully dressed and of charming manners, who is altogether pleasing as long as she keeps her mouth shut. But the moment she opens it, half her charm vanishes. There is no tone in her voice; no varieties of light and shade in the pitch of the sounds, no varieties of quietness or warmth in her speech; no rhythm of effect. Even if it is not harsh, it is disagreeably monotonous.

Or somebody else reads a passage from Shakespeare, say *The Balcony Scene* in "Romeo and Juliet." He is not as bad a reader as he might be; for example, he does not stumble over the words or jump over the punctuation. In fact, he reads intelligently, with considerable attention to the meaning of the speeches. And yet, after all, he reads very badly, for his voice fails entirely to bring out the

music of the verse. The scene is one of the loveliest ever written, and it was written to be spoken aloud, so that the loveliness of the thought might be conveyed in sounds of corresponding loveliness. But of this our reader seems ignorant. He does not appear to know that Shakespeare intended every vowel sound to be uttered in such a way as to bring out the particular quality of its beauty; and arranged the sequence of the sounds, so that one should flow into another in an exquisite rhythm of rising and falling melody. This reader "murders" the beauty of the scene, because there is no quality in the tone of his voice and no tonal expression. Do you understand what I mean?

If you have not thought of this before, I hope you will give it some attention in future. For it is in the power of everyone of us to improve the quality and expression of our voices.

## CHAPTER XVII

### BRUSH-WORK AND DRAWING

NOW that we have come to an end of our talk upon color, I must say a little about brush-work. I hope to show you that a good painter may use his brush in such a way that there is quality and expression in the actual strokes.

I say a good "painter," because I am thinking of that distinction I pointed out to you, between artists who are really painters or colorists, and those who are, more strictly speaking, draughtsmen. The latter, you will remember, pay particular attention to the lines of their figures, and then in spreading the paint, are careful that it shall not interfere with the outlines. On the other hand, the man who is, strictly speaking, a painter, sees his figures as colored masses.

I tried to show you that each method is right from its separate point of view. But at the time we talked about this, we had not studied the meaning of quality and expression. So I put off telling you about the possibilities of quality and expression in line. We will talk about it now, and then return to the brushwork.

Remember, what we are to think of now is a

drawing of a figure or object, represented simply in outline, with no added strokes to suggest light and shade. It may have been done with a pencil or brush, or in one of many other ways; but it is only outline. Now many people think the only purpose of the outline is to enclose the figure, so that we may see what the figure is. They may think the figure is beautiful, because it represents something of which they are fond; the plump body of a baby, for instance. But suppose the figure represents an old worn-out beggar, with long scraggy arms and bare, misshapen feet. Would they see any beauty in it? I expect not.

Yet, although there may be no beauty in the figure, there may be a great deal in the lines which enclose it. If so, the beauty of line, of which we are now talking, must be an abstract beauty; due to something in the line itself, independently of the figure with which it is associated.

Suppose you draw a line on a piece of paper. What is the result? The line has taken a certain direction, and it is of a certain kind. It is thick or thin, or it begins thin, grows thicker and then diminishes in width, or vice versa. It may be faint or distinct; firm or wavering, and so on. Which ever kind it is it will be so, either because you wished it to be of that kind, or because you couldn't make it otherwise. In either case, it is you that have made the line what it is. If you have enough skill, you can make the line exactly what you wish.

Again, the direction of the line is the result of a movement of your hand and arm. Very likely you moved uncertainly: you were not even sure in what direction it was moving. But, if you were a skilful and practised draughtsman, don't you suppose you could so regulate the movement of your hand and arm, that the line would take the exact direction you desired? Yes, you would have as much control over the direction and character of the line, as a musician has over the keys of a piano, over which his hands move in various directions, sounding the various notes.

But is the skill in doing this all that makes a good musician? You know that he must also play, as we say, with feeling. This means, first, that he must be able to feel the beauty of the music; secondly, that he knows how to move his arms and touch the notes so as to draw forth from them just the quality of sound that the feeling demands, and to make the whole body of sounds render an expression of the feeling.

Now, just as the feeling passes from the brain of the musician into the tips of his fingers, so it does with an artist. You will see him, as he tries to tell you about the beauty of something, circling his hand in the air, meanwhile curving his fingers and thumb, as if he were trying to grasp the beauty. It is an instinctive movement, due to his habit of expressing his conception with his hand. A sculptor will do much the same thing, only he is more apt to close his fingers and express his meaning with his thumb

—the part of his hand that he uses most in modeling.

One of the most beautiful examples of feeling in the hand is illustrated in the modeling of a vase. The potter stands before a "wheel," or table, the top of which revolves. There is a spike in it that holds in place the lump of clay. But while we watch, it has ceased to be a lump. It has grown up under the potter's hands and is a hollow vessel, every moment changing its shape slightly, as with his fingers or the palm of his hand he brings it nearer and nearer to the design that is in his brain. He stops for a moment, and we think that he has finished. But, no, he is only criticising it. It is not yet quite as he feels it should be; and again the wheel revolves and the hand,—oh! so tenderly—coaxes the clay to receive exactly the line of beauty that he feels.

And from the potter we may gain another insight into the beauty of an artist's line. I said that the clay grew up into the required form. And certainly if you have seen the operation, you will say that growth is just the word. Now in the line of all beautiful drawings there is the feeling of growth. Not in a metaphorical way, but most literally, the line grows under the artist's hand, impelled by the feeling in him that he is trying to express.

Let me tell you a little experience of my own. Though I am not an artist, I have often made drawings. One day I was enlarging a piece of ornament, in which there were scrolls of acanthus leaves; big

cabbagy sort of leaves, with a curving spine and crinkly edges. The chief point was to get fine winding lines into the curves. For a long time I imitated the copy as well as I could, when suddenly I seemed to feel within me just how the curve should go. It was not a matter of seeing the copy, but of feeling the actual growth in my brain. And lo! a miracle, for one moment my hand was able to do what my brain prompted. That leaf actually grew under my hand. I could feel it growing. And of course that was the best bit of the whole drawing. The rest was mechanical; this bit really lived. Well, in my case that was a miracle and has never been repeated. But in that moment I learned two things—firstly, what must be the joy of an artist in the act of creation; and, secondly, that an artist's line may be a living growth; and, in the case of really fine draughtsmen, always is.

Since then I have watched the growth of trees and plants, and discovered, as you may for yourself, the separate beauty and character that belong to the lines of growth of each separate plant and tree. And, when you have done so, you will come back to the study of line in drawing, convinced that the beauty of line consists in its expression of life and character. Not only the life and character of the object represented, but the life and character of feeling in the artist.

Now perhaps you will realise how a drawing, though it represents only an ugly old beggarman, may be beautiful. Life, in all its forms is wonder-

ful, even if sometimes horrible. And the expression of it by a thing so slight as a line is beautiful, because we need not trouble about the object represented, but be satisfied to enjoy only the life and character that the line expresses.

It will also help you to understand and appreciate the abstract quality of line, if you study Japanese drawings and prints. For their way of representing figures and objects is not the same as ours, nor do we always know what the subject of the picture is about. Therefore we are better able to enjoy the line in an abstract way, apart from all consideration of the things that are represented.

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After this little talk on line, we may now pass to brushwork. It is no longer the thin edge that we are to keep in mind, but the mass, great or small, as the case may be; the mass of a gown, for example, or the mass of one of its folds.

I need not tell you that an artist's hands may be alive with feeling when he holds a brush, just as when he has a pencil in them. In fact, what we have said about feeling and expression in line may be applied to brushwork. In the case of a man who is not merely a filler in of spaces with paint, but is by instinct a painter, the brushwork grows into life beneath his hand. Sometimes he lays aside his brush and takes a palette-knife, with which to spread the paint on the surface or to scrape the part already painted. Sometimes he uses no tool at all, but kneads the paint with his thumb. Whether he

employs these or other methods, is a matter of comparative unimportance. The main thing for us to realise is that, whatever means he employs, it is because he is giving expression to some feeling in his mind. There is a passage of feeling from his mind through his arm to his hand, and thence to the canvas.

The swifter the passage is, the more vitality, as a rule, will there be in the brushwork. The reason is, that in such a case the artist is sure of himself. The feeling in his mind is so clearly comprehended; he so thoroughly feels what he wishes to express, and is so sure of the way to render it, that there is no hesitation or sign of fumbling in the result. It has grown freely and naturally and the result gives us that keen and direct pleasure that we derive from what is brimful of life.

You know how stimulating it is to listen to a speaker, whose words flow from his thoughts without any humming and hawing; and whose words naturally and exactly express the thought. In such a man's talk there is a living growth of thought. As you proceed in your study of painting you will learn to feel in brushwork either the presence or absence of such living growth.

You will find sometimes, however, that the brushwork, which at first seems very much alive, is not really a living growth. It is more like the clever tricks that you perform with your bodies in a gymnasium. It is merely an exhibition of vigor. I may liken this to the oratory of another sort of

speaker, who has a great gift of the gab but very few ideas. He pours out of his mouth a stream of vigorous, showy, fine-sounding words; and fascinates you for a few minutes with the "exuberance of his verbosity." But presently, when you come to think it over, you discover how pretentious and slip-shod the whole speech was. He was exhorting to patriotism; but, where Lincoln would have left us with a few choice thoughts, so perfectly expressed that they will remain for ever in the memory, this man has only bedecked his generalities with a confusion of words. His speech is not golden, but cheap tinsel.

Well! you will find that there are painters also, so much in love with the exuberance of their own cleverness, that they are satisfied to do nothing but make a gymnastic display of it.

You will find too, that there are others, to whom the mere manual dexterity is so objectionable, that they deliberately try to make you lose sight of any brushwork in their pictures. Whistler was one of these. He used to say that a picture is finished, when the artist has completely disguised the means by which it has been produced. He wished the expression of his feeling to reach our imagination immediately and fully, without any other consideration blocking the way or interfering with our appreciation.

His method of painting was deliberate; a little added to-day, something more another day; the whole process extending, frequently, over several years. For the feeling which he wished to express

was a very subtle one, so the living growth of it, as of many things in nature, was slow. On the other hand, most of the great painters seem to have been swift workers; or at any rate their final result gives one the impression of having been executed in the vigor and glow of a swiftly working mind.

The best way to learn to appreciate brushwork is to stand close to a picture, and observe the various kinds of strokes and dabs and streaks. They seem to have no meaning. But step back. Then all or most of the separate brush marks will have disappeared. They are merged into one another and their meaning becomes clear. Then, after having thoroughly studied the effect which the artist has produced, you may again step close up to the canvas and examine the means by which he has attained it.

If it is a landscape you are studying, you will find, possibly, that the sky, which from a distance seems to be grey, is really composed of streaks of blue and pink and grey. It is, in the first place, by these streaks of the brush, and, secondly, by the infusion of several colors, that the artist has succeeded in making his sky have the appearance of atmosphere, extending far and far back. Then, if you examine the trees, you may possibly find the strokes short and stubby, so as to bring out the character of the foliage; while, what from a distance gave the impression of being simply green, is also found on closer inspection to contain many spots of other colors. It is in this way that the action of light upon the foliage has been suggested; so that

the trees from a distance do not seem hard and heavy but penetrated with light and atmosphere.

In this way, stepping nearer to and further from the picture, and continually asking yourself: What is the impression that the artist wished to convey and why has he done so and so? you will soon find that you are getting an insight into the quality and expression of brushwork.

Now one word more. A little while ago I alluded to "finish." What is "finish"? Most people think it means that every part of a picture should be brought up to a uniform degree of polish and precision. It should be sleek and shiny, like our shoes, when the man has finished shining them.

Certainly you will see many pictures that seem to justify this explanation. But as a rule they will not be examples of good painting. You remember our talk on texture. Well, only some textures are sleek and shiny and polished. So, if this whole picture is of that character, some of the textures must have suffered. Then again, life is not uniform, it does not show itself in all people and things in the same way. Therefore it is very likely that the uniform polish and precision of this picture has interfered with its expression of life. The whole thing is mechanical rather than vital.

No, you must be prepared to find in well painted pictures, all sorts of conditions of not seeming to be finished; all kinds of different styles, coarse, refined, bold, dashing, reticent, and tender, brilliant, and modest; almost as many different styles and

conditions as there are painters. For a painter's use of the brush is an expression of his own individuality and life, as well as of the life and character of the subjects he represents.

I have already told you Whistler's definition of "finished." It is perhaps too much a product of his own personality to be of general service. One more applicable to all kinds of painters and pictures is the following. An artist has finished his picture, when he has succeeded in making it express the feeling that inspired it. This will include Whistler's definition, and also the practice of a Titian, a Rubens, or a Velasquez, whose brush strokes are visible to this day, as witnesses of the living growth of their conceptions.

Further it will include many pictures that to your eyes seem unfinished. They look like sketches, and, therefore, you think, cannot be considered as a finished picture. But go slowly with a thought of that sort. As you advance in appreciation you will find that many a drawing of a few lines only, and many a little picture, composed of a few touches of color, have in them more of the living growth of feeling, more of the charm of abstract beauty than thousands of so-called finished pictures, in which the original feeling, if there were any, has been submerged in an ocean of trivialities.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### SUBJECT, MOTIVE, AND POINT OF VIEW

AT the beginning of our talks, you may remember, I told you I should not have much to say about the subjects of pictures. For I wished at the start to make you realise, that what a picture is about is of much less importance than the way in which the subject is treated. A fine subject may be treated in such a way as to make a very bad picture, while a good picture may be composed of a subject in which one is not particularly interested. In fact, I wished to help you to look at a picture first and foremost as a work of art; a thing beautiful in itself because of its composition of form and color; beautiful in an abstract way, that is to say, apart from the ideas suggested by the subject. My aim has been to try to teach you to admire a picture in an abstract way, as you admire a Japanese or Chinese vase, simply and solely for its beauty of form and color.

This is not the usual way. Most people begin by taking interest in the subject of a picture, and very many never get any further in their appreciation. On the other hand I felt that, if I could once get you interested in the abstract qualities of a pic-

ture, you would be started right, and that your interest in the subject would be sure to follow after. So our talk about subject has been put off until now.

Pictures are sometimes sorted into groups according to their subject. There are religious pictures; pictures of myths and legends or imaginary subjects; portraits; landscapes; historical pictures, like *Washington crossing the Delaware*; genre pictures or scenes of every day life; still-life subjects, representing flowers and fruits, dead birds, beasts and fishes, and objects of man's handiwork; decorative subjects and mural paintings. But this grouping does not settle the matter, since each of these subjects can be treated in more than one way. How it is treated depends upon the motive and point of view of the artist.

So, the simplest way to grasp this matter of subject is first of all to find out what is meant by an artist's motive and point of view. As usual, let us start with dictionary meanings of these words and then see their application to what we are discussing.

Motive, then, is that which causes a thing to move, which impels it. What is the motive power of that train? Is the power that moves it steam or electricity? What is the motive of any particular artist, the force which impels him to adopt a certain method or to work in a certain direction?

Point of view on the other hand, is the point at which a person stands to view something. You may watch a procession in the street from the point of

view of a window. But the word is more often used, not of where your body stands, but of where your mind stands. According to our birth and bringing up; that is to say, as the result of what we inherit from our forebears, and have acquired by education and experience, we each have our own point of view. For example, you will not hesitate to say that your point of view is American. You read about the Panama canal. You are not only interested, but proud, because Americans are digging it. If the French, who began it, were carrying on the work, your interest in it would be less and your pride nil. When you travel abroad, at any rate for the first time, you will not be able to help making critical comparisons between the way they do things in Europe and at home. You will be apt to see everything from the point of view of an American. Your point of view is the result of your being what you are. And it is the same with an artist. Being what he is, and what he cannot help being, he has his own particular personal point of view. Being what he is, he also has his own individual motive. Through the union of motive and point of view, he sees things in his own way and in his own way is impelled to represent them.

Since each artist is a person different to all other persons, the varieties of motive and point of view are infinite. There is no end to the variety; and, as you grow older, and continue your study of pictures, you will find more and more interest in looking into and discovering just what is the particular mo-

tive and point of view of each artist. For he cannot help betraying them in his pictures, any more than you can help betraying yours, if, being a partisan of Yale, you are watching a football game between Yale and Harvard. Just as your behavior will betray your feelings, so is a picture the expression of an artist's personal likes and dislikes. In studying pictures, therefore, you are also studying the personality of the men who painted them.

I wish you to feel that this sort of study has no limits. Its interest will last you, as long as you live. At the same time my aim is to help you to enter upon the study. And at the start everything should be made as simple as possible. So, although motives and points of view are infinite in variety, let us see if we cannot find some simple clue to the study of them. I think it may be found in dividing all artists into two big groups. On the one side, those who are inclined to represent the world as they see it to be; on the other side, those who represent things according to their own ideas. It is the great division between the *naturalistic* or *realistic* and the *idealistic* motive and point of view. Some artists are naturalists, or realists; others are idealists; a great many are a mingling of the two.

This broad general distinction must be thoroughly understood. For you can see that it would be impossible to enter into the merits of an *idealistic* picture, if you insist on approaching the study of it from the *naturalistic* point of view. And vice versa.

The only way to appreciate a picture is to approach it from the point of view of the man who painted it. We must try to enter into his mind and find out his motive and see the subject as he saw it.

When we have done so, we may not like his picture. That is another matter. Perhaps his motive and point of view, when we have discovered them, do not please us. Our own are so different, that he and we cannot really agree. Or possibly, while we agree with his motive and point of view, we do not feel that he has expressed them well. In either case, his picture is not for us. At least, not to-day; for, as we grow older, we shall find that our own motive and point of view are apt to change. We have studied more, and know more, and may find that pictures, we once did not care for, we now admire; and, on the other hand, that the pictures we once liked have ceased to please us.

Now for a talk about the difference between *naturalistic* or *realistic* and *idealistic*. When the art of painting began to revive in Italy at the end of the Thirteenth Century, the first aim of the artists was to make their pictures more really resemble life and nature. I have already told you of Giotto, who gave roundness and natural gestures to his figures, made the objects look more real, and suggested the depth and distance of their surroundings. Next of Masaccio, who gave his figures still more resemblance to life, and filled in their surroundings with a suggestion of atmosphere. Then I told you of

Mantegna, who from the study of the remains of classic sculpture gave further naturalness of life and vigor to his figures; until, by degrees, from the observation of nature and the study of the classic sculpture, artists reached proficiency in the natural rendering of the figure. So far as form was concerned, their figures were absolutely natural. But, as yet, the *naturalistic* motive and point of view had not included the seeing and rendering of nature's light. That was to come later.

On the other hand, the study of classic sculpture, while helping the progress toward naturalism, had started some artists in the direction of a new motive and point of view. For now the appreciation of the antique sculpture became increased and supplemented by the study of scholars, who were translating and explaining the newly discovered writings of the Greeks and Romans. Plato was the special favorite, and the Italians of the end of the Fifteenth Century learned from him the motive of *idealism* and the *idealistic* point of view.

They learned from his writings to think not only of things, but of ideas. Even to consider ideas of more importance than things; especially the idea of beauty. You will remember that in speaking of Raphael's *Allegory of Jurisprudence*, we said that Jurisprudence represented an abstract idea: the conception of what justice is in itself and of the qualities of Prudence, Firmness, and Temperance that it involves, apart from the machinery for making and administering the law. Men make laws, and

some are good and some are bad. Even the good ones are not always perfectly administered. To-day, in America, our conception or idea of law is higher than our methods of putting it in practice. Everywhere, always, men's ideals are higher than their conduct.

Ideals, then, which are the motives, resulting from ideas, represent the highest effort of man after what is best and most beautiful. Most beautiful because it is best and best because it is most beautiful.

Such was part of what artists learned from Plato. Do you see how they applied it to their art? To Leonardo da Vinci, one of the first Italian artists to become influenced by the classic spirit, the teaching appealed in some such way as the following: The idea of Beauty is separate from the things or objects in which it is manifested; just as we may have an idea of smell apart from any particular flower; or of love, apart from the object of our love. The highest ideal for an artist is to express in his pictures something of this abstract idea of beauty, to give to his figures beauty and grandeur of form and noble heads; to put them in positions of grace and dignity. He will not paint human nature as he sees it to be, with all its imperfections, but will people his pictures with a race of men and women and children of ideal beauty.

This was the motive that inspired those noble Italian pictures of the Sixteenth Century. It was from the high standpoint of abstract beauty that the artists looked at their subject. Their point of

view was *idealistic*. But this was not the only thing that made their pictures noble. The artists were inspired also by a great demand on the part of the people of their day. Religion held a strong place in the hearts of the people. They called for pictures to beautify the churches and, at the same time, to teach those that could not read the beauties of religion. To-day people have learned to read, and books to a large extent serve the purpose that pictures used to do. But in those days the people needed pictures; and it was this strong need, acting like rich soil to the beautiful plant of idealism, that helped to produce these wonderful pictures. They are the most wonderful that the modern world has ever seen, just because of this union of two most strong motives—the religious need of the people and the exalted love of beauty of the artists.

But note the character of these pictures. Sometimes, for example, the Virgin is seated on a throne, surrounded by angels and apostles, saints and bishops; or at other times, Christ and his apostles are represented in some scene from the New Testament story. The first presents an entirely imaginary arrangement of the figures; the second makes no pretence to representing the scene as it may have actually occurred. The apostles, many of whom were fishermen, have heads as noble as philosophers; robes arranged in beautiful folds of drapery, and conduct themselves with the grace and dignity of some fine classic statue. Every line, every arrange-

ment of form and space, is designed to assist in building up a composition of ideal beauty.

Or with the same motive the artist would treat some subject of Greek mythology, such as the story of Psyche. This again was a response to a strong need of the public. Not so wide a one as the religious need, but still a strong one, for among the cultivated classes there was an intense interest in the old classic myths.

Or from the same *idealistic* point of view the artist would decorate the walls of a City Hall. To this also he was impelled by a strong public need: the desire of the citizens to express their pride in themselves and their city by means of beauty. For by this time the Italians had learned to express all their highest ideals in forms of ideal beauty.

But a change came. The Italians, long a prey to foreign enemies and quarrelling among themselves, at length lost their liberty and their pride in themselves. Other nations surpassed them in learning and culture; and even Religion lost its intense hold on the public mind. With the loss of high ideals the glory of *idealistic* painting in Italy waned and disappeared.

But artists of other lands continued to regard the *idealistic* painting of the Italians as a model of what came to be called "the Grand Style." During the Seventeenth Century Spanish artists imitated it in their religious pictures. But elsewhere it was used chiefly for great works of decoration; as by

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View on the Seine. *Homer D. Martin.*

*(Also called "The Harp of The Winds")*

Rubens in Flanders (Belgium) and Le Brun in France. The former, for example, built up a series of magnificent compositions in honor of Marie de Médicis, the wife of Henry IV of France. They are now in the Louvre in Paris. Le Brun's vast paintings and tapestries, that decorate the palace of Versailles, were designed to extol the glory in war and peace of Louis XIV, who at the end of his long reign left his country poor and his subjects miserable.

In fact, *idealistic* painting that had once been great, because nourished by an intense religious motive or by the motive of civic pride, had sunk to being a means of flattering the vanity of monarchs or pandering to the luxury of the idle rich. So during the Eighteenth Century it continued to languish. The form alone remained, growing less and less beautiful; the old spirit of it was dead.

A new one, however, arose and had a brief spell of life, for it was based on the awakened desire of the French people for liberty. In the years before the Revolution David painted *idealistic* pictures. He chose his subjects from the history of the Roman Republic, in order that by the example of its patriotism he might stir his own countrymen to action. The models for his figures he took from old Roman sculpture. His pictures fitted the temper of the time and helped the cause of liberty; but when Napoleon made himself Emperor David passed into his service, and the high motive for his *idealistic* pictures ceased.

Later painters have turned again to Italy, and by building up imposing arrangements of figures have tried to make the spirit of Italian idealism live again. They have not succeeded. Perhaps for two reasons. First, that the old Italian compositions are mostly of an allegorical character, and allegory does not interest the modern mind. We are interested in realities. Second, that those compositions were based on the beauty of form of the human figure; the artists made their forms as perfect as possible and placed them in an artificial arrangement that would produce a pattern or composition of beauty and dignity. But modern art is more concerned with rendering the natural appearances of the world; and, if it idealises them, does so, as we shall presently see, by means of light and atmosphere.

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Meanwhile, that Seventeenth Century, in which Italian *idealistic* painting dwindled, saw a new outburst of the *naturalistic* or *realistic* motive in two parts of the world; simultaneously, in Spain and Holland.

I have already told you how Velasquez in Spain and the Dutch artists devoted themselves to the study of the persons and things actually present to their eyes. They were *realists* or *naturalists*. Holland had cut herself off from Flanders and the splendid vice-regal Court of Brussels, and her own noblemen were busy fighting for their country's freedom. So there was no demand for her artists to

paint handsome decorations. She had also cut herself off from the Roman Catholic religion; and in the churches of the Reformed Faith there was no demand for great religious pictures. These two motives were lacking; but she had another one—a very strong one—the love of country and the pride of the people in themselves. It was strong enough to produce a great school of painters of little pictures, distinguished for their great truth to nature.

Among these Dutch artists, however, was at least one who was not only a *realist* but an *idealist*. This was Rembrandt. It is of his idealism that I will speak here; and, to illustrate it, will tell you of a small religious picture in the Louvre: *The Visit to Emmaus*. You remember that Christ in the evening of the day of his Resurrection came upon two of his disciples and joined them in their walk to the village of Emmaus. Not recognising him, they talked of what had happened. It was not until the little party had reached the inn, and the Saviour raised his hands in blessing the food, that their eyes were opened and they knew him. It is this moment that Rembrandt represented.

When you see this picture you will find no grandeur in it such as the Italian pictures have. The figures are those of poor ordinary men. Rembrandt, being also a realist, drew them from the real types of poor Jews in the Ghetto, or Jew-quarter of Amsterdam. There is nothing of imposing dignity even in the Saviour's form and face. Whatever may be

the idealism in the picture, it does not depend on form. Its motive is different from that of the Italians. Its motive is light. From Christ's figure spreads a light. Is not one of his titles—The Light of the World? And the light, flowing from this humble figure, illumines the faces of his humble companions and, passing up to the vaulted ceiling, sheds through the gloom a mystery of tremulous glow. The picture like the subject it celebrates, is a miracle—a miracle of light.

Do you see how this was an expression of idealism? Rembrandt in studying the world around him had discovered, like other artists of his time, the beauty of light. Light by degrees represented to him the highest element of beauty in the visible world. While the great Italians had found the ideal or highest conception of abstract beauty in form, Rembrandt found it in light. Therefore, when he painted this picture and wished to show that these figures, though humble looking, were not ordinary men, and that the event was no ordinary meeting at a village inn, he proceeded to idealise the scene according to his own conception of ideal beauty. He introduced into it the beauty and mystery of light.

Please note that word mystery. A mystery is what passes beyond our knowledge and understanding, something that cannot be grasped by our mind and intelligence. Thus we speak of the mystery of life: scientists have discovered how the various forms of life have been developed on the earth, but the origin of life is still a mystery to them. Even when they

have traced life back to the smallest conceivable beginning, they are as far off from knowing what started that smallest beginning into life. But because they do not know, do they say "Oh, what we do not know is not worth the knowing"? No indeed! they realise, that hidden in the mystery is a truth, even more wonderful than what they know.

Or again, some beautiful summer night by the sea-shore you are looking out over the water. The moon is low and her rays make a pathway of light. You gaze along it and at first the waves are clearly visible, heaving in the light; further off, the movement of the waves disappears; only a luminous glow remains, growing fainter and fainter, till far away it melts into that thin line where sky and water meet—the horizon. Do you know that horizon really means boundary, the limit of our sight, the point beyond which our eye has no power to see? But is there nothing beyond? If we took ship and sailed beyond that pathway of light, should we ever reach the horizon? We should only sail on to find the horizon continually beyond our reach.

Or we turn our gaze from the water to the sky. Above us, further than eye can travel, it extends. It is studded with innumerable stars. We may know the names of some of them, and have learned about their movements and their distance from the earth; but what do we know, what does any one, even the wisest and most learned, know of them, compared with our ignorance of them? It will be well for us,

as we gaze into the mystery of the heavens, to be thinking less of the little knowledge that we have than of the miracle, the wonder, of what transcends man's understanding; of the vast, impenetrable mystery that surrounds our lives. To do so will fill us with, what we call, a spiritual joy; a joy, that is to say, which goes beyond knowledge, and affects that higher capacity of feeling that, not knowing what it is, we call spirit. This highest feeling, that we call spiritual, has always in it some element of mystery. The truth of this was curiously expressed by a little girl of my acquaintance, who was very fond of having her mother read poetry to her. I asked her if she understood a certain poem. "Of course not," was her quick reply, "what fun would there be in poetry if you could understand it?"

Well, I have spoken at length of Rembrandt, because his way of idealising a scene through the beauty and mystery of light, has become the way of modern artists. But it was not until nearly two hundred years after his death that the world came round to this way. In the mean time Rembrandt and the other Dutch painters of his Century, like Velasquez, had been forgotten. The painters were busy trying to keep alive the other notion of idealism, the Italian one, based on form. Indeed, it was not until naturalism again became popular, that idealism by means of light was renewed.

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I have already told you of the revival of *naturalism* at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century; how the

English landscape painter, Constable, was followed by the French landscapists of the Barbizon-Fontainebleau group. You remember that their point of view was nature as it is visible to the eye, but their motive was also to express the feelings of love with which it inspired themselves.

Then, about the middle of the Century appeared Gustave Courbet who loudly proclaimed himself a *realist.* He meant by this that he was not moved by sentiment, as the Barbizon *naturalists* were; that he believed that the only thing which concerned a painter was to paint what he could see, as it appeared to his eye alone. He wished to limit his art to what is visible to sight. So he thought it was foolish for an artist to attempt to represent a scene from the Bible or any historical subject or subject invented by the imagination. As the artist had never seen these things, he had no business, as a painter, to try and represent them. He was going outside his own art and meddling with some one else's: the art of the writer or actor, for example.

Courbet's point of view of *realism* and his motive, to paint only what he could see, were carried further by another Frenchman, Édouard Manet. He had become a student of the works of Velasquez, from whom he had learnt: firstly, a new way of viewing his subject; secondly a new way of rendering what he saw. This new way of viewing the subject is what is now called "*impressionism.*"

I am sorry to have to trouble you with a new word;

but I think you are prepared for it, since impressionism professes to be only a more natural and real way of seeing things. Of *seeing* things, that is the point. It does not take account of what things are, but of the *impression* they produce upon our mind, when they appear before our eyes. You are at work in school, and a stranger enters the class room. He converses for a few minutes with the teacher and then goes out. What sort of man was he? If there are twenty children in the class, and each, on arriving home, relates the circumstance of the visit, there will probably be twenty different impressions of the visitor's appearance. They will agree in some points and differ in others; yet each one of the impressions may be a true one—as far as it goes. How far it goes will depend on the quickness and thoroughness of your observation. But anyhow, it will not include a great number of details; it will rather be a general impression.

If you look out of window into a street, you may see a number of figures on the sidewalks. You receive a general impression of figures, moving or standing still; some men, some women, representing various spots of one color. Now a *realistic* painter might say, "Each one of those figures represents a real person; I will paint him as he really is; and, to do so, will ask him to stand still long enough for me to study him exactly in all his visible details." "And if you do," retorts the *impressionist* painter, "you will paint something so real, that it will be too real. For you never could see these people in

Evening. *Anton Mauve.*

this way, if you look at them on the street. The greater part of the details would be lost in the general impression."

Well! the more you think of it, the more right you see the *impressionist* is—from his point of view. He says, if you are going to be natural, be really natural; if you want to make your pictures look real, make them real in a natural way. If the only thing in art is to be as like nature as possible, and to represent things only as they would appear, if you suddenly looked at them, the *impressionist* is right. And what makes this way of looking at things particularly interesting is the fact, that it is so often the momentary effect in nature that is most beautiful: the effect that lasts but a moment, that is fugitive or fleeting, caught in an instant, before it changes to something else. You know what I mean from your own experience. A certain expression passes over your friend's face. "Oh! if I could only photograph her now," you exclaim; but by the time you have arranged your camera, it is gone, and cannot be brought back to order. Well, it is just that fugitive, fleeting expression of a subject that the *realist*, who is an *impressionist,* tries to represent in his pictures.

So far I have tried to explain the *impressionist's* point of view. Now let us consider his way of *rendering* what he sees. The whole secret of it is the part which light plays in the appearance of things. Manet and the other impressionists, among whom Claude Monet and Whistler are the most important,

see every thing, as Vermeer did, enveloped in light. But they have gone further than he.

They have studied much more closely the ever varying qualities of light, as it differs according to place and season and even time of day. Monet has painted a series of pictures the subject of every one of which is the same haystack. At least that is how some people might describe them. But, if they enter into Monet's point of view, they would say that the real subject is not the haystack but the effect of light upon its surface, and, as the effect of light is different in every case, none of the pictures are similar to one another. Each represents a separate fugitive expression of light. Monet, in them and other pictures, has recorded with extraordinary subtlety the impression presented to his eye. For Monet's *impressionism* was also *naturalistic.*

Whistler, on the other hand, with no less subtlety, rendered also the impression that the things seen had made on his imagination. He was an *idealistic impressionist.* He painted, for example, a number of night-scenes, or "nocturnes," as he called them. The actual objects in them are of less importance than Monet's haystack, because in the dim light of twilight or night they are only faintly visible. Whistler did not wish us to be aware of the form of the bridge, or the boat, the sea and shore, or whatever the objects may be. He wished us to be conscious of them only as Presences looming up like spirit-forms in the mystery of the uncertain light. Such nocturnes as *Battersea Bridge* and the sea-shore

picture, *Bognor-Nocturne,* appeal to us like Rembrandt's *Visit to Emmaus.* Just as the latter's forms were humble, so the bridge itself is an ordinary sort of structure, and the sea-shore and the boats are without any unusual distinction. Yet in each case the scene has been idealised through the mystery of light, and appeals to our spiritual imagination. After two hundred years Rembrandt's new principle of *idealisation,* founded upon the abstract beauty of light instead of on the abstract perfection of form, has been accepted by modern artists.

To a greater or less degree all artists, whether *naturalists* or *idealists,* who are painting in the modern spirit have been influenced by Monet and Whistler. The example of these two has spread far and wide the study and rendering of light. But, while their followers agree in this motive, they are independent in their points of view. There are some whose point of view, like Monet's, is *objective.* They are content to render the *impression* made upon their eyes. But, as their eyes see differently from Monet's, their pictures are different from his. Each is the record of a separate personality. Equally, while others, like Whistler are *subjective,* recording the *impression* produced upon their minds, their pictures vary according to the character and quality of their separate minds. In fact, in later times, a notable feature of painting is its diversity of motives and points of view.

Let me try to explain this. Ever since the American and French Revolutions, there has been a grad-

ually increasing interest in what we call individuality. The main object of these revolutions was to establish the right of each and every individual to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and the idea of government now is to give every individual the chance of making the most of his or her possibilities. Your teachers, for example, are not running their classes as machines; they are trying to make a personal study, so far as possible, of each one of you, in order to help you to develop your particular individuality. For a long time this has been the principle of education and government. The result is that there has been a universal increase in individuality, since numbers of people who had some special possibility have had a chance to develope it. To-day, in fact, there is probably nothing that counts more than individuality. This being so it is natural that we should look for it in art. And, if we do, we shall find it.

In former times there were "schools of art." In Italian art, we speak, for example, of the Florentine School, the Venetian School, the Roman School; or we speak of the Flemish School, and Dutch Schools and so on. In each case the artists, living in a certain city or country, had sufficient resemblance among themselves in their motives and methods of painting to produce a certain separate style. So, to-day, if an expert sees an old picture, he is able to say at once and, more often than not correctly, that it belongs to such and such a school.

But an expert of a hundred years hence, when he

sees our modern pictures, will not speak of Schools. He may see at once that the picture is by an American, a German, or a French artist, for difference of race and habit of life and thought do still stamp in a general way the pictures of each separate country. But even within the limits of any one country there are as many varieties of motive and point of view as there are individuals.

So in modern times, more than ever before, there is an individual, personal note in pictures, just as there is in books. The artist makes the picture an expression of his own personal feelings. This is one reason why modern pictures are inferior to the old ones in grandeur and dignity. The older ones were not only larger in size, as a rule, but they were impersonal, like a fine building is. The architects who designed the Capitol at Washington put their own personal expression into it. But we do not feel it, as we look at their work. On the contrary, it is the impersonal, monumental dignity of the work that impresses us. But in most modern pictures, instead of what is impersonal, we receive a distinct impression of intimacy, of sharing the artist's feeling. And it is the expression of this that we not only look for but enjoy discovering. We often speak of it as the sentiment of the picture.

This sentiment may be of all sorts and shades of feeling, "from grave to gay, from lively to severe." It may be romantic in spirit, appealing to us through the suggestion of what is weird and surprising; it may be full of the tenderness or of the trumpet call

of poetry; it may invite us to gentle reverie, or stir in us a profound and poignant emotion. But I have said enough to point your way.

* * * * * *

In conclusion let me sum up the contents of this long chapter. We have seen that there are two main streams of motive and point of view; the *idealistic* and the *naturalistic*. The former flows from the artist's desire to represent his conception of ideal beauty, the latter from his love of nature. We have seen that they have alternately reached their highest flood, because the conditions of the times supplied a great public need to which each in turn responded. Lastly, we have seen that gradually both tendencies have undergone a change. Whereas originally both the naturalistic and the idealistic motive were concerned with form, they came to be concerned particularly with light.

Therefore, when you look at a picture, ask yourself: Has the artist simply tried to render the visible appearance, or has he also tried to make the subject interpret some feeling of his own?

If he is simply rendering the visible appearance: Has he been conscious only of form, or has he viewed the form in its envelope of lighted atmosphere? Further, has he tried to represent the visible appearance, as we should find it to be, if we studied each and every part of it separately; or he has tried to give the impression of the entire scene, as it really reached his eyes?

If he is interpreting through the subject his own

feeling: What is the quality of the feeling? Does the picture simply express the artist's consciousness of the grandeur or the loveliness of nature, or does it also interpret his feeling for the mystery of things not seen?

Here are a few hints for you in setting out to explore the vast country of motive and point of view.

THE END

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